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Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight Committee July 15, 2025 In person testimony

Chair Gossage,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with the Committee. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong oral health by shaping policy and educating the public.

Legislature's 2025 Investment

This year the Legislature invested \$10 million All Funds in a Medicaid dental rate increase. Only 30% of dentists in Kansas are seeing people with Medicaid coverage, so this increase is an integral part of the plan to grow the Medicaid dental provider network. Thank you for your support in making this possible!

In 2022, the Missouri Legislature increased their Medicaid dental rates to the commercial level. Missouri paired their rate increase with a Dental Medicaid Facilitator program, providing technical assistance to dental offices to help them learn to become Medicaid providers. Within three years, the results of the combination of the rate increase and Dental Medicaid Facilitator program were decisive:

- The number of Medicaid dental providers in Missouri increased by 694
- The number of Missouri Medicaid members who received dental care increased by over 81,000
- The number of rural counties without a Medicaid dental provider was cut from 36 to 17

Oral Health Kansas has launched our own [Dental Medicaid Facilitator program](#) with outreach to dental offices and technical support to help them become Medicaid providers. A November 2024 report from the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute showed that four out of five dentists say low Medicaid rates is their top barrier.¹ The Missouri experience shows us that combining our new Dental Medicaid Facilitator program with the rate increase just passed will help recruit more Kansas dental offices to be Medicaid providers.

2025 Dental Rate Increase

The Medicaid dental rate increase went into effect July 1, 2025. Oral Health Kansas and the Kansas Dental Association conducted a survey of dental providers to ask their priorities for the rate increase since there was not enough money to increase the rates to the competitive commercial level as Missouri did. Over 75 providers responded, and the comments made it clear that the current rates continue to be a barrier for providing services. Comments included:

- "The only way to encourage more dental offices to be Medicaid providers is to increase your fee schedules."
- "Compared to neighboring states, our rates are very low."
- "At current rates it is horrible business to accept Medicaid."

While the new rate increase falls short of what is needed, we are hopeful it will show a good faith effort as an interim step to finishing the job and making all of the rates competitive enough to build a meaningful dental provider network.

In the survey, a combination of current Medicaid providers and dental offices that are not **Medicaid providers prioritized dental exams, cleanings, and fillings as the services that need rate increases most urgently. The new rate increase follows these recommendations.** It honors the work all providers do by increasing all of the rates, but it prioritizes those service types. We applaud Director Osterlund and her team for their hard work on implementing this rate increase.

Oral Health Kansas will keep this Committee updated on the rate increase implementation and the effect it has on the provider network.

Sedation Dental Care

In addition to the Medicaid dental rate increase the Legislature approved this year, **you also approved an increase in the hospital sedation dental code known as G0330.** The code pays for hospital operating room time for people who need hospital sedation in order to receive dental care. Few people need this care, but for the ones who do need it, it is truly lifesaving. This rate increase was recommended by the [2024 Special Committee on Sedation Dentistry](#), and it will be an important tool in making sure sedation dental care is available to the Kansans who need it. Thank you for your support of this increase.

Another tool in sedation dental care access is having a reliable list of sedation dental care providers. The new MCO contracts require the MCOs to track and report on their list of sedation dental providers. As you may recall, we have been working with the MCOs on a survey of dental offices to determine what kind of sedation each offers, if any. There are many sedation options, and it is important for consumers to know exactly what kind of sedation is offered. These levels include nitrous oxide, in-office IV sedation, and general anesthesia in a hospital operating room. Options also include a dentist doing the in-office IV sedation themselves or bringing in a mobile sedation provider such as a CRNA. Having a clear list of exactly which types of sedation offices offer and what populations they serve will go a long way toward creating meaningful access to sedation dental care for people who need it.

We are working with United, Sunflower, and Healthy Blue to prepare to launch the dental provider sedation survey. Our goal is to announce the survey in August and launch it in September. We look forward to sharing the results with you in the fall.

Next Steps

- We invite Committee members to **watch our video introducing our Pathways to Oral Health project**, which is designed to increase access to dental care for people with disabilities. It's available on our [YouTube channel](#). Check out the [Pathways to Oral Health website](#) and share it with your constituents. There are many resources available for providers and consumers.
- If any Committee members **know of dental offices in your districts that are not Medicaid providers** but are interested in learning more, please connect them with us so we can provide information and technical assistance.
- In August and September, **we will host two educational webinar series for dental offices.** One is an introduction to becoming a Medicaid provider, and the other is an exploration of how to provide dental care for people with disabilities. We are happy to share more information about both educational series.

- We **are preparing to advocate in the 2026 Legislative Session for a dental rate increase** to finish the job and get the rates to a level that is competitive enough to encourage more dental offices to become Medicaid providers.

We remain grateful to this Committee for your study of the complex issues around Medicaid dental care, and we thank you for your leadership in improving the dental program in Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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¹ American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute: "[Barriers to Dental Care Among Adult Medicaid Beneficiaries: A Comprehensive Analysis in Eight States](#)," November 2024