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## Senate Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services January 23, 2026

Chair Owens,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with the Subcommittee. 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.

### A Winning Formula to Grow the Medicaid Dental Provider Network

In 2022 the Missouri legislature invested funding to increase their Medicaid dental rates to the commercial level. This was a bold move. At the same time our sister organization, the Missouri Coalition for Oral Health, started something new called a "Medicaid Dental Facilitator program." This program provides administrative support and education to dental offices to help them understand the Medicaid program, how to enroll as a provider, and what the best practices are to be a successful Medicaid provider.

By pairing a meaningful rate increase with a Medicaid Dental Facilitator program, Missouri was able to increase the number of Medicaid dental providers by 700 and cut the number of counties without a Medicaid dental provider in half. This pairing has proven to be a winning formula to realistically and sustainably grow the Medicaid dental provider network.

### Bringing the Model to Kansas

Last year the Kansas Legislature invested \$10 million in the Medicaid dental rates. This followed the addition of dental coverage for adults. Also last year, Oral Health Kansas started our own [Medicaid Dental Facilitator program](#). We have educational resources and administrative support available for dental offices, and we have been able to help several offices enroll in Medicaid.

Thank you for your investments. They are making a difference. Because of your investments, we are seeing the Medicaid dental provider network start to grow. Twenty new providers joined after the rate increase last summer. And three counties that had no Medicaid dental provider now have one. The momentum is going in the right direction. Providers continue to tell us they need to have more security in the Medicaid rates. So, we need you again.

### What the stakeholders are saying Dental providers:

- A dental provider not currently enrolled in Medicaid told us she was, "pleasantly surprised" to see the new rates. She went on to say the **new rates "look very promising."** She is now a Medicaid provider. This was the intended effect of the rate increase.
- Dr. Laura Huyett is in private practice in Kansas City. She submitted written testimony saying, "While I feel a sense of calling and a duty to serve all members of my community, I also have the fiduciary responsibility of running my business. Successfully accomplishing these two statements is increasingly difficult as the **reimbursement rates of Kansas Medicaid**

- Dr. Chuck Abbick is at the safety net clinic in Salina. His written testimony tells the story of his clinic trying to meet growing needs and turning people away. He says, "I sincerely believe that increasing the Medicaid Dental reimbursement rate would help tremendously. Currently, **the reimbursement rate is so low that it's not financially realistic for a private practice dentist to accept Medicaid.** I'm optimistic that increasing the reimbursement rate would change this."
- Dr. Jill Jenkins is a Kansas City pediatric dentist. Her testimony says, "My practice employs nearly 50 people – dental assistants, front desk staff, hygienists, managers – people raising families, buying homes, contributing to the local economy. **Medicaid funding directly affects my ability to keep those jobs strong and stable.**"
- Dr. Nick Rogers is a general dentist in Arkansas City who has a long history as a dedicated Medicaid provider. His testimony says, "As the number of children with Medicaid continues to increase and the overhead costs of our office operations increases, **we have considered limiting the number of Medicaid patients that our office will accept.**"

The latest research from the American Dental Association demonstrates that the cost of running small businesses is rising faster than in the past. One Kansas dentist told us their expenses have increased dramatically in the last five years, while reimbursements have not increased at a similar pace:

- Dental supplies – 20-100%
- Salaries – 20%
- Lab fees – 20%
- Medical gas – 100%
- Business insurance – 250%

#### Consumers and Families:

- Meghan Shreve is the Executive Director of InterHab. Her testimony says, "Finishing the Medicaid dental rate increase, at an estimated cost of \$12M SGF, is essential to achieving the Legislature's goal of meaningful access to care... **This request is not about expanding benefits. It is about making existing coverage usable for some of the most vulnerable Kansans.**"
- Melanie Jacobs is a parent advocate and primary caregiver for her adult daughter with disabilities. Her testimony says, "**I am asking you to continue the work you began.** Please support an increase in Medicaid dental reimbursement rates so more dentists can afford to treat adults with disabilities-especially those who require sedation or hospital-based care, so families like mine are not left without care, without options, and without hope."

Over 30 state and local organizations and advocates have added their names to the list of those asking to finish the rate increase.

2026 Medicaid Dental Rate Increase Coalition Member	City
Advocacy Forward	Gardner
<a href="#">Benevis and Kansas Youth Dental</a>	KC, Topeka, Wichita
<a href="#">Children's Dental Professionals, LLC</a>	Wichita
<a href="#">Disability Rights Center of Kansas</a>	Statewide
<a href="#">Enable Dental</a>	Wichita, Kansas City
<a href="#">Fales Pediatric Dentistry, PA</a>	Olathe
<a href="#">Graham County Health and Wellness</a>	Hill City
Justina Hartman, Advocate	Independence
<a href="#">Health Forward Foundation</a>	Kansas City

<a href="#">Mark A. Herzog, DDS, PA</a>	Ellsworth
<a href="#">InterHab</a>	Statewide
Melanie Jacobs, Parent Advocate	Wichita
<a href="#">Jenkins Dentistry for Kids</a>	Shawnee
<a href="#">Adam F. Lukens, DDS, LLC</a>	Wichita
<a href="#">Kansas Association of Local Health Departments</a>	Statewide
<a href="#">Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities</a>	Statewide
<a href="#">Kansas Dental Association</a>	Statewide
<a href="#">Kansas Dental Team</a>	Kansas City
Kimberly Knowland, RDH	Topeka
<a href="#">Little Chompers Pediatric Dentistry</a>	Leavenworth
Trina Morgan, Parent Advocate	Wichita
<a href="#">Olathe Pediatric Dental</a>	Olathe
<a href="#">Pediatric Dentistry, LLC</a>	Hutchinson
<a href="#">Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas</a>	Statewide
<a href="#">Steven D. Pendleton, DDS, PA</a>	Kansas City
<a href="#">Rawlins County Dental Clinic / Northwest Smile Center</a>	Atwood
<a href="#">Rogers Family Dentistry</a>	Arkansas City
<a href="#">Smile Avenue Dentistry</a>	Overland Park
<a href="#">The ARC of Douglas County</a>	Lawrence
<a href="#">Tiny Teeth Pediatric Dentistry</a>	Wichita
<a href="#">Valley Falls Family Dentistry</a>	Valley Falls
<a href="#">Vibrant Health</a>	Kansas City

### Seizing the Momentum

The Ways and Means Committee has studied the issues around meaningful access to dental care for a number of years, and you have made so much progress in improving things for Kansans. Adults now have dental coverage, and the lives of Kansans are changing because of it. The data and the insight from dentists demonstrate that more investment is needed. Dentists and consumers are asking for the Legislature to finish the job of increasing the rates to a level that is sustainable for small businesses and that creates meaningful, sustainable access to care for Kansans.

It's important to note that there is no back up plan. When people can't find a dentist who accepts Medicaid or community dental clinic that has openings available, there is nowhere to go. People go without care. Families are exhausted. They work hard every day to ensure every type of need their loved ones have is met. They worry that a dental problem could exacerbate other health problems and risk their family member's life.

**We ask this Committee to support completing the Medicaid dental rate increase with a \$12M SGF investment in 2026.**

This is the final piece of the puzzle that will make a difference in growing and sustaining the Medicaid provider network, and we stand ready to help providers take the next step and enroll in Medicaid. Without this additional investment we stand to lose all the progress that has been made in the last few years. As the cost of doing business squeezes dental offices, these small businesses have the best of intentions to serve their community, but they cannot do so if they operate at a loss. Let's help make Medicaid an easy decision for dental offices across Kansas. Small businesses that thrive are guaranteed to improve the health of Kansans. The Missouri model shows us this is true. Finishing the rate increase will save lives and save money.

### **Donated Dental Services**

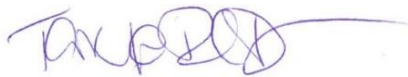
The Donated Dental Services program is a cost-effective approach to ensuring people with disabilities who have no other source of dental coverage to get much needed and often life-saving dental care. The Donated Dental Services program has operated on an administrative budget of \$70,000 for a dozen years. This is not enough to keep up with inflation and the rising cost of administering the program. The time is now to invest a small amount of money to ensure the sustainability of the program.

**We support increasing the budget for the Donated Dental Services program by adding \$55,000 to the budget.**

We remain grateful to this Committee for your study of the complex issues around Medicaid dental care in Kansas, 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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Executive Director  
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### **Bonus Information: Support for Dental Providers**

I want to share a list of the resources we have been developing for dental offices to help them learn more about Medicaid and how to be a successful provider. The [dental provider webpage](#) on the Pathways to Oral Health website has a number of resources and short guides several subjects, including:

- The new Medicaid rates
- Medicaid dental coverage
- Enrolling and credentialing
- Filing claims
- Setting reasonable limits on the patient mix
- MCO Quick Reference Guide

We have a seven-part webinar series to complement the guides, and the recordings are available to [view on our website](#).

Please feel free to refer any dental offices in your district to these resources and let them know we are available to provide technical assistance to help them be successful.