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KDHE Budget Input Meeting August 18, 2026

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

2026 Dental Rate Increase

Earlier this year, the Legislature invested \$2 million SGF in a Medicaid dental rate increase. This is part of a series of investments in the Medicaid dental program over the past several years. As you know, ensuring an adequate and sustainable Medicaid dental provider network is the final piece of the puzzle to provide essential, timely, and ultimately cost-saving oral healthcare to Medicaid members in Kansas. We are grateful to your partnership in making this journey possible.

From 2021 to 2024, the Medicaid dental provider network suffered a 20% net loss of dentists enrolled in the system. Recent investments, paired with supports put in place by Oral Health Kansas' Medicaid Dental Facilitator program, have slowed the rate of attrition. In 2025, there was an 8% increase in enrolled dentists, with the greatest gains coming after the rate increase was implemented in July 2025. From January-June 2026, there has been a further net gain of 14 providers enrolled. Yet, as of Q2 2026, only 20% (n=314) of Kansas dentists actively billed for Medicaid dental services, and even fewer, 15%, billed for 10 or more unique Medicaid members. Rural areas remain most affected, with more than 40 rural counties having no Medicaid dental provider. Missouri shows what's possible when rates rise to a place which is financially feasible for dental offices. After raising the rates to commercial levels, there was a net increase of almost 450 providers enrolled in the Medicaid network and the number of rural counties without a Medicaid provider fell by half.

Provider Survey

Earlier this year, Oral Health Kansas and the Kansas Dental Association, with assistance from Community Care Network of Kansas, conducted a survey of dental providers to ask their priorities for the 2026 rate increase. Although providers commented that recent rate increases were "helpful," they overwhelmingly identified continued reimbursement improvements as the single most important strategy for expanding and sustaining the Medicaid dental provider network. Compared to last year's survey, responses reflect a marked increase in frustration with reimbursement rates, with many providers reporting they feel unsupported, undervalued, and that their concerns about the sustainability of their practices, dental team, and patients are not being adequately addressed. Responses must be placed within the context of an economically challenging time for the dental economy. Dental office overheads are increasing faster than overall inflation and reimbursement rates are not keeping pace with the increasing costs of delivering care.

- *"Until reimbursement rates improve... access to dental care for Medicaid patients will continue to decline. The issue is not a lack of willing providers—it is a system that fails to adequately support them."*
- *"Unless Medicaid rates come close to 90th percentile [of the] commercial insurance rate, we do not stand a chance."*
- *"The cost of doing dentistry and paying wages to employees increases every year. Medicaid rates cause dentists to actually lose money."*
- *"Until reimbursements increase across the board, it's hard for me to see many dentists becoming Medicaid providers. Our profit margins have shrunk too much in the past several years to be able to afford it."*

While the new rate increase falls short of what is needed, we are hopeful it will continue to demonstrate the immense value we know you place on dental health and dental health providers, and act as a steppingstone to rates which can support a Medicaid dental provider network adequate to provide care for all Medicaid members. We extend immense gratitude to Director Osterlund and her team for all the thoughtful work that has gone into the 2026 rate increase.

Resources Available for Dental Offices

- Medicaid Dental Facilitator Program- Launched in 2025, this Oral Health Kansas led program provides technical assistance to dental offices to help them become a successful Medicaid provider. Support includes enrollment guidance and examining coding/billing concerns. We work closely with the KanCare MCOs and KDHE to address challenges as they arise.
- Medicaid Webinar Series- Designed to teach dental teams about the Medicaid dental program and how they can be a successful Medicaid provider, our monthly webinars include subjects such as Medicaid rates, coverage, and most recently, MCO Value-Added Benefits. Webinars and recordings are available at no cost. Please feel free to refer any dental offices to this resource.

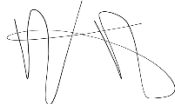
SFY 2028 Budget Request

To fulfil the health-giving and economic potential of the Medicaid dental program, Oral Health Kansas respectfully requests that KDHE include **\$11 million SGF** for additional Medicaid dental reimbursement rate increases in its SFY 2028 budget request.

The recent investments are beginning to produce measurable improvements in provider participation, but continued investment is needed to retain current Medicaid providers, encourage additional dental practices to participate, and improve access to timely dental care throughout the state.

We remain grateful to the agency for your dedication to studying and improving the Medicaid dental program and for continued partnership. We are seeing year-over-year improvement, and your leadership makes this possible. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Brooks Robertson
Executive Director
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