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## Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight Committee January 23, 2026 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 Investment

Thank you for your investment of \$10 million All Funds in a Medicaid dental rate increase last year. This is so important, and it is making a difference. Last summer, Oral Health Kansas and the Kansas Dental Association sent a letter to every dentist in the state to notify them about the rate increase. 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. Some of these are comparable to Delta Dental now." She is now taking steps to become a Medicaid provider. This was the intended effect of the rate increase.

We continue to hear from providers who are encouraged by the rate increase and are now taking another look at Medicaid. We also hear from providers who have been enrolled in Medicaid and now say it is more feasible for them to consider staying in Medicaid. This is the whole point of the increase – to strengthen and grow the Medicaid dental provider network. Thank you!

### Cost of Doing Business

When we came to the Legislature last year to talk about the need for a rate increase, we asked for a little over \$40 million All Funds. This funding would bring all the Medicaid dental rates to the commercial level and to the level of the Missouri Medicaid rates. The \$10 million made a big difference because it was targeted to the rates that are used most frequently by dental providers, but it was not sufficient to get even those rates to the level that will make it an easy decision for every dental office to accept Medicaid.

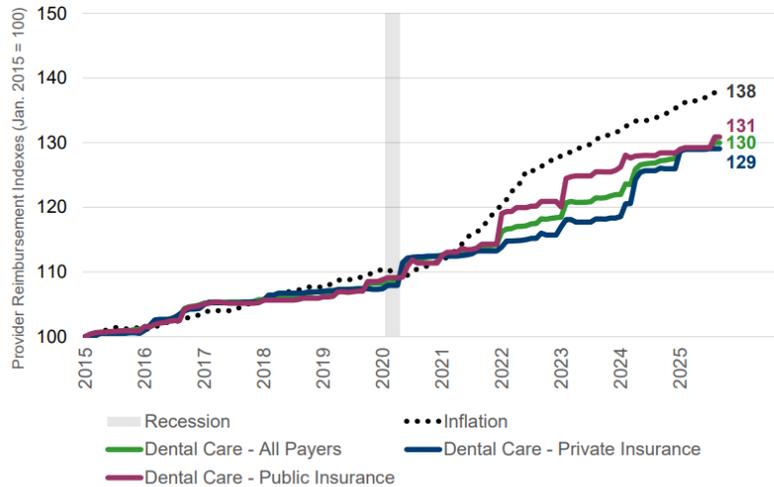
Dental offices are small businesses, and they are dealing with the ever-increasing cost of doing business. One dental office told us their staffing costs have increased 77% over the last ten years, and their supply costs increased 47%. When rates paid for services don't keep pace with the cost of doing business, providers sometimes have to make tough choices, including which payors they will accept. Our goal is to make it easy for dental offices to accept Medicaid because the rates paid cover the cost of services provided.

The American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute published data noting that reimbursement rates are not keeping up with inflation. They said, "In September 2025, provider reimbursement rates in the dental sector were stable. However, longer term, they are not keeping pace with overall inflation and certainly not with practice expenses. These trends are putting a significant 'fiscal squeeze' on dental practices."<sup>1</sup>

The same data report also noted that the prices for dental equipment and supplies increased in 2025 and were up 5% from January to September.<sup>1</sup> This data is consistent with what providers in Kansas are telling us. One provider told us, "I currently see many of the Medicaid patients in my rural town. I am having to limit the number of Medicaid patients I see as there aren't many providers who accept adult Medicaid. It's not sustainable and it isn't fair to the patients who have to wait months to be seen by me or the single other adult Medicaid provider in the area."

## Reimbursement Rates Not Keeping Up with Inflation

In September 2025, provider reimbursement rates in the dental sector were stable. However, longer term, they are not keeping pace with overall inflation and certainly not with practice expenses. These trends are putting a significant "fiscal squeeze" on dental practices.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

HPI Health Policy Institute  
ADA American Dental Association

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### Seizing the Momentum

This 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 are asking for the Legislature to finish the job of increasing the rates to a level that is sustainable for small businesses.

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.

We ask this Committee to support completing the Medicaid dental rate increase with a \$30M All Funds 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.

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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<sup>1</sup> American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute: "[The State of the US Dental Economy, 4th Quarter 2025 Update.](#)"

### **Bonus Information: Provider Guidance**

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.