

Chair Greenlick and members of the House Health Care Committee:

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of newborns by preventing birth defects, preterm birth and infant mortality. We work through programs of research, education, community services and advocacy. On behalf of the March of Dimes Oregon Chapter, I would like to ask for your support of **HB 3023** which would require that referrals to dental specialists, of pregnant medical assistance recipients occur within 60 days of the referral. Timely access to dental care for pregnant women is critical. Timely access to dental care for pregnant women may reduce preventable complications for the pregnant woman.

Pregnant women on medical assistance programs may only have access to dental benefits during the pregnancy and during the postpartum period. Upon delivery of the newborn dental care benefits may no longer be available for many. Optimum oral health which includes access to specialty dental care is critical to overall health of the mother. Poor oral health can negatively impact dietary behaviors and result in poor nutrient intake. Pregnancy changes in the body can affect gums and teeth. During pregnancy, there is more blood flowing through the body, more acid in the mouth and rising hormone levels. These changes mean that it is more likely to have more dental health problems during pregnancy than before pregnancy. If oral health was poor before the pregnancy it often will become worse during the pregnancy.

Access to a dental specialist when a referral is made is part of the overall health of a pregnant woman. Oral health disorders such as periodontitis is associated with many disease processes that can affect a woman's health across her lifespan. Again, the prevention and treatment of oral health disorders are essential for general well-being and for many women on medical assistance programs pregnancy may be the only time dental benefits are available. For the improved health of our mothers and infants March of Dimes supports **HB 3023**.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Rogovoy  
State Director of Program Services and Government Affairs  
March of Dimes  
Greater Oregon Chapter