

March 20, 2015
Oregon State House of Representatives
Committee on Health Care

The Oregon Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists would like to offer its support for House Bill 3023 sponsored by Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, which requires that referrals to dental specialists of medical assistance recipients who are pregnant occur within 60 days. I am unable to be present in Salem today, and wish to submit testimony in writing.

Pregnancy and the preparation for parenting is a special time in a family's life, when attention to matters of health and nutrition are particularly acute. As such, it presents a "teachable moment" when good health habits can be established. Access to dental health services is difficult for many families on public assistance or with limited insurance coverage. So getting women seen during pregnancy is particularly important.

In 2013 the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists published Committee Opinion #569: Oral Health Care During Pregnancy and Through the Lifespan", included as an attachment to this letter. The abstract reads as follows:

Oral health is an important component of general health and should be maintained during pregnancy and through a woman's lifespan. Maintaining good oral health may have a positive effect on cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other disorders. In 2007-2009, 35% of US women reported that they did not have a dental visit within the past year, and 56% of women did not visit a dentist during pregnancy. Access to dental care is directly related to income level, the poorest women are least likely to have received dental care. Optimal maternal oral hygiene during the perinatal period may decrease the amount of caries-producing oral bacteria transmitted to the infant during common parenting behavior such as sharing spoons. Although some studies have shown a possible association between periodontal infection and preterm birth, evidence has failed to show any improvement in outcomes after dental treatment during pregnancy. Nonetheless, these studies did not raise any concern about the safety of dental services during pregnancy. To potentiate general health and well-being, women should routinely be counseled about the maintenance of good oral health habits throughout their lives as well as the safety and importance of oral health care during pregnancy.

We support HB 3023 which should improve access to dental health services for pregnant women, and improve the health of Oregon families.

Yours truly,

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