



<b>To</b>	Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care
<b>From</b>	Jessica Guernsey, MPH, Maternal Child Health Director Multnomah County Health Department
<b>Date</b>	March 16, 2015
<b>Subject</b>	HB 3023 Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 3023. This bill provides accountability for timely access to dental care for pregnant women.

Multnomah County supports timely access to specialty dental care for pregnant women. Pregnant women in Oregon and in Multnomah County face many barriers and disparities in care, and this bill can help to address an important one for maternal and child health.

Accessing specialty dental care in a timely manner is essential for pregnant women. Healthy pregnant women have a better chance of giving birth to healthy babies. And this is especially true for dental care. The State of Oregon has a special interest in women who receive dental benefits during pregnancy for care provided through the Oregon Health Plan. This population's improved access to specialty dental care will yield better health and also financial savings from reduced health problems downstream. There is strong evidence of the connection between untreated tooth decay and the impacts on pre-term delivery, low birth weight, and cavities in early childhood.

Women who receive OHP pregnancy benefits have a short time period to obtain access to dental care. Because their coverage ends soon after giving birth, delays mean they may lose coverage before needed treatment can take place. With their short coverage window and the high potential impact of care, pregnant women have special needs for timely access to dental care.

Pregnant women on medical assistance programs are at higher risk of periodontal disease, which affects 40% of pregnant women. Pregnancy is an important time, when mothers are motivated to make life changes and learn new health behaviors. This moment is especially important for recipients of public assistance programs who receive dental benefits for short periods. Improving access to dental care and necessary specialty dental services is an opportunity to teach pregnant women about optimal oral hygiene and pass healthy habits, including using dental services, to their children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3023. If you have questions, please contact Sami Jarrah, Deputy Director for Integrated Clinical Services, at 503-988-4826 or [sami.jarrah@multco.us](mailto:sami.jarrah@multco.us).