

House Committee on Health Care
March 20, 2015
HR E, 1:00 pm

RE: HB 3023

Testimony:

Tony Finch, Executive Director
Oregon Oral Health Coalition

Attn: Rep. Mitch Greenlick and members of the Committee

I would like to testify in favor of HB 3023. While there may be some amendments we have not been able to review, in concept we support ready access to dental care for pregnant mothers. This aligns with the Strategic Plan for Oral Health in Oregon. The Strategic Plan is a collaborative effort of the Oregon Oral Health Coalition and our partners, the Oregon Health Authority and the Oral Health Funders Collaborative for Oregon and SW Washington.

We state there that prenatal oral care is crucial to preventing early childhood oral disease, as is a comprehensive dental screening and risk assessment by age 1. Unfortunately, fewer than 50 percent of expecting mothers in Oregon receive an oral exam during pregnancy, and the 2011 PRAMs (Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System) report indicates that 42.4% of pregnant women encounters with healthcare providers did not even include information about the importance of dental care during pregnancy.

Transformative integrated care must make every effort to educate mothers, refer them for timely care, and prepare them to raise caries-free children. We will improve our progress of preventing early childhood caries by going upstream in our messaging and implementation of care and prevention.

Timely access to care is important for expecting mothers – and the sooner the better. The prenatal and perinatal period has by nature a defined period of time, and it is an especially crucial time to address all issues that would compromise the health of the mother and her child – including oral health disease.