

Providence Health & Services
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www.providence.org/oregon



April 13, 2015

The Honorable Mitch Greenlick
Chair, House Committee on Health
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: House Bill 3506, Increased dental benefit

Dear Representative Greenlick and members of the committee:

Providence Health & Services is consistently striving to find new, meaningful ways to care for individuals in the communities we serve - particularly the poor and vulnerable. This work leads us down many different paths but few have proven to be as successful as our partnerships aimed at reducing oral health problems.

In 2011, we identified 4.5% of patients visiting the emergency department at Providence Milwaukie Hospital were in need of oral health care – of those 80% were on Medicaid or had no insurance. With treatment options in the ED limited to prescribing antibiotics and pain medications, the problems were never adequately resolved and almost half the patients returned with the same condition. In response Providence partnered with Neighborhood Health Clinic, a federally qualified health center, and established a dental clinic on the PMH campus. Since the dental clinic opened in 2013, readmissions to the ED for oral health have dropped from 45% to 31% and total oral health visits are down to 3.1%.

House bill 3506, is a small but valuable step forward in dental health coverage for Oregon Health Plan recipients. Tooth extraction that is medically appropriate due to severe pain is reasonable and will likely reduce costs in other areas of the health care system, like EDs. With respect to dentures, ensuring timely access and replacement is equally as valuable – when individuals aren't consumed with oral pain and cosmetic insecurities, their lives can improve in countless positive ways.

Providence looks forward to continued discussions about improving appropriate access to oral health services in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment; we hope you'll join us in support of House Bill 3506.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pam Mariea-Nason RN, MBA".

Pam Mariea-Nason, RN, MBA
Executive, Community Health Division
Providence Health & Services - Oregon