

February 17, 2022

House Rules Committee

RE: HB 4035

Chair Smith-Warner, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Fahey, and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Dr. Manu Chaudhry. I serve as President of Capitol Dental Care (CDC). We are a Dental Care Organization (DCO) that provides care to Oregon Health Plan (OHP) beneficiaries, through contracts with Coordinated Care Organizations (CCO) across the state.

Also, I am an OHP Medicaid provider and provide dental services to Oregonians.

Capitol Dental Care is writing to request that there is continued inclusion of oral health coverage for OHP beneficiaries in any bridge plan to be implemented in the upcoming redetermination requirements for the Oregon Health Plan.

We fully support the language in Section (4) subsection (5)(b), which states that the recommendations and proposal for a bridge program must “be consistent with the Oregon Integrated and Coordinated Health Care Delivery System,” and “enhance the coordinated care organization delivery system.” As a long-standing, integral part of the Oregon Health Plan, oral health coverages are provided to all OHP members. We believe that oral health should be similarly integral to any proposed bridge program. It is critical that OHP members have continuity of care throughout the redetermination process to ensure that their health is not adversely impacted and remains consistent during this time.

Capitol Dental would also request that the potential addition of language stating that dental benefits should be included “to the extent practicable” be deleted and that full consideration of oral health benefits along with physical and behavioral be considered for the bridge plan. We would recommend that the task force start by designing a package that reflects Oregon’s values, which includes appropriate physical, oral and behavioral health.

While we understand that considering the cost of a benefits package is critical, we do not believe that, in the long term, removing dental benefits would reduce costs as those without dental coverage would only be able to access dental care through an emergency room visit. We also are concerned that OHP beneficiaries would lose any continuity of care for oral health issues they are currently addressing.

Oral health is a critical component of overall health. Without adequate and appropriate dental care, an individual's health and quality of life can be adversely impacted. Individuals with dental disease are more likely to experience depression, lack of confidence, and difficulty obtaining employment, and self-report a lower quality of life than do people with healthy mouths.

Capitol Dental Care would further recommend that a dental representative be added to the task force, as discussions of any bridge plan should include an individual knowledgeable in the importance and provision of oral health services and their benefits to the overall health of an individual.

As a Dental Care Organization (DCO), we are committed to providing oral health services to all underserved populations who are in need of care. It is very important that Oregon recognizes the critical need to provide continuing oral health care to OHP beneficiaries as they navigate through the redetermination and their future care needs and coverages.

We would like to thank Rep. Prusak and other members of the House Health Care Committee, as well as OHA and other stakeholders for their work on HB 4035.

Capitol Dental Care appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4035. And, we thank you for your consideration of our testimony.