

HAI PHAM, DMD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 36



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of HB 2597

Good afternoon Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Javadi, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Hai Pham and I am the State Representative for HD 36.

In our current landscape, **1.4 million or 1/3rd of Oregonians are on Medicaid**. Currently there are approximately 3,500 licensed dentists in Oregon. And **about 12% of all Oregon dentists provide nearly all of the Medicaid treatment**. In other words, there is a huge patient population often waiting months to receive access to care and there are not enough providers seeing Medicaid patients.

We know that providers and insurers across the state are concerned about reimbursement rates. Rates have not kept pace with rapidly rising costs for materials, rent and staffing. And when OHP reimbursement rates are significantly lower in comparison to those offered by private insurance, providers often operate in “the red” when taking care of patients on OHP.

The OHP Dental Provider Enrollment Report published in 2024 at OHSU in Collaboration with OHA, which I have uploaded and is available to the public through OLIS, recommended financial investments and time to increase reimbursement rates.

The report also found that Oregon’s Medicaid reimbursement is only 28.3 percent as a percentage of dentist charges for adult dental services, compared to neighboring states Washington and California that have higher rates at 42.9 percent and 44.9 percent respectively.

Inadequate reimbursement was one of the most common barriers to accepting OHP, and improving reimbursement would help attract additional providers. We recently did this for behavioral providers and this did help improve access to care.

I want to personally thank OHA for listening to my concerns. They have made some strides to address this issue by working to implement directed payments for 2025 to help recruit more providers. But this isn't enough. We need to have a conversation about the methodology of how we are setting dental rates and in other sectors in healthcare. Currently, we are looking back at historical utilization for us to calculate and estimate future rates. And this is failing miserably.

I believe that raising OHP reimbursement rates for dental care can improve and strengthen access to care for our most vulnerable population.

HB 2957 uses a data-based approach to reimbursing dental care providers, creating a better and more competitive payment mechanism to specifically address this issue. This aims to provide stability for dental providers as the bill aligns the rate review and payment with the general process already used by commercial dental payers when determining rates for network providers.

In closing, to ensure we have healthy communities, we need to include oral health in the conversation along with Physical and Behavioral Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I urge your support for HB 2597.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hai Pham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hai Pham, DMD
State Representative HD 36