



California State Legislature

Joint Republican Caucus



December 9, 2016

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Room 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Denti-Cal Funding

Dear Governor Brown:

Our state Denti-Cal program is supposed to provide quality dental care for 13 million low-income Californians, including over 5 million children. However, a bi-partisan report issued by the Little Hoover Commission in 2016 reveals that “California’s Medicaid dental program is widely viewed...as broken, bureaucratically rigid and unable to deliver the quality of dental care most other Californians enjoy.”

We know that the inability to obtain proper dental care, particularly preventative care, can have significant long-term impacts. Tooth decay and disease are associated with pregnancy risks, diabetes and respiratory and heart disease. For California’s children, a lack of access to dental care can result in expensive emergency room visits, missed school days, poorer academic performance and ultimately lost job opportunities. This results in multi-generational poverty and increased social costs for taxpayers.

According to the 2014 *Weaknesses in Its Medi-Cal Dental Program Limit Children's Access to Dental Care* report by the California State Auditor, current provider reimbursement rates for the top 10 children’s dental services paid in California are only 35% of the national average. Largely because of the low provider reimbursement rates eleven counties have no dentists willing to accept new child patients covered by Denti-Cal, and five of those counties have no Denti-Cal providers at all.

During the last budget cycle, Assembly and Senate Republicans requested that you address Denti-Cal’s serious problems by allocating \$200 million in the state budget to increase provider rates for the most common dental services. We tried to generate bi-partisan legislative support for our proposal, which would bring California dental provider rates up to the national average and emphasize preventative care. Unfortunately, we were not successful in convincing our Democrat peers to make Denti-Cal a budget priority. We hope this year will be different.

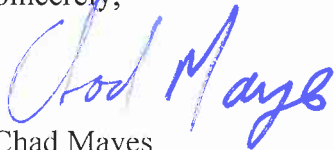
We have the opportunity and responsibility to fix one of our state’s core health care programs so it will better serve Californians in poverty. Assembly and Senate Republicans have introduced

Assembly Bill (AB) 15 to increase Denti-Cal funding in a meaningful and responsible way, so that the 13 million Californians eligible for dental care are able to access those benefits.

We believe the funding for our plan should come from Proposition 56 (The California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016), which was passed by voters in November 2016. It specifically provides new funding to address the shortage of dentists, prevent and treat dental diseases, and improve existing programs to provide quality healthcare and access to healthcare services for families and children. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimates that Proposition 56 will increase net state revenues by \$1 billion to \$1.4 billion and these funds are clearly available to fix Denti-Cal.

We understand that money cannot fix every state program that does not work properly. In this case, additional funding for Denti-Cal provider rates is prudent and justified while continuing to operate under the status quo is irresponsible. The legislature and administration have a responsibility to ensure that existing programs are operating efficiently and effectively before making new budgetary promises. Denti-Cal is responsible for providing 13 million Californians with a basic level of dental care, but it has failed too many for too long. Fixing Denti-Cal is a top priority for Legislative Republicans, we urge you to join us in helping California's most vulnerable.

Sincerely,



Chad Mayes
Assembly Republican Leader



Jean Fuller
Senate Republican Leader