



February 16, 2026

Vermont House of Representatives
Committee on Health Care

Dear Members of the Health Care Committee,

I am writing to express concern with the Administration's proposal to remove entirely the incentive payments currently in place to dental providers who see a significant number of Medicaid patients for their dental needs. This program was instituted years ago as a means of encouraging dentists' participation in the Medicaid program, and has been very helpful to those practices that are doing just that.

As you know, the Medicaid funding for dental services is woefully behind the cost of providing services, and continues to lose ground each year that it receives no additional funding.

Removing this program will not only exacerbate this funding problem, but it will also send a negative signal to those dental providers participating in the program.

Moreover, this proposal does not revert the supplemental payment monies into the broader Medicaid funding for dental services but rather cuts it entirely. This will also result in the loss of the federal match for these dollars.

Not only is this a disincentive for dentists, it is poor care for patients, and it does not save dollars; in fact, it will lead to more costly emergency care. I have numerous -hundreds of- examples of adults with Medicaid coverage who delay and defer care until problems become emergencies, leading to higher costs, loss of work, and emergency room visits. This is inefficient, ineffective, and does not save resources. Prevention and maintenance are always cheaper, more effective, and longer lasting.

My practice has recently tried to open our doors to seeing more adult patients with Medicaid coverage. It is only because of the improved payments that we have been able to do so. These patients have been so deeply grateful, because they have not been able to readily find a practice who will take them, even with the "improved" reimbursement. If their reimbursement is reduced, maintaining them in our practice is simply unsustainable.

It is noteworthy that hygienist salaries have nearly doubled, due to a shortage, since 2020. Inflation has raised our expenses dramatically. It is already a struggle to sustain a practice that provides a quality service and a living wage to employees, which we strive to do. We simply cannot survive further cuts and remain viable.

I was in public health for many years and am devoted to trying to provide care to all patients. I also need to provide for and take care of my nearly 20 employees, and try to earn a modest living myself. These funds are critical to ensuring that vulnerable Vermonters can continue to receive preventive, less costly, timely care that keeps them from developing poor outcomes and requiring more expensive services. I understand that funds are limited, but this truly should be a no brainer. I am happy to discuss further if you would like to hear more about my experiences and concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

Most Sincerely,

Katera F. Hopkins, DMD
Alpine Family Dental