



April 11, 2023

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Finance Health  
Subcommittee  
Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines  
Co-Chair  
Senate Committee on Finance Health  
Subcommittee  
Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: *An Oral Health Crisis: Identifying and Addressing Health Disparities***

Dear Chair Cardin and Ranking Member Daines:

The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement for the record for the hearing, *An Oral Health Crisis: Identifying and Addressing Health Disparities*.

Founded more than 50 years ago, ANCOR is a national, nonprofit association representing 2,000 private community providers of long-term supports and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), as well as 56 state provider associations. Combined, our members support more than one million individuals with I/DD across their lifespan and are funded almost exclusively by Medicaid. Our mission is to advance the ability of our members to support people with I/DD to fully participate in their communities.

ANCOR is grateful for the work of the subcommittee in highlighting the need for better accessibility of oral health care for people with disabilities. Disparities in access to and coverage of dental care for people with disabilities is a problem that jeopardizes individuals' overall health and undermines Medicaid's goal of ensuring equity for all.

Across the country, Medicaid is the largest payor of supports and services for people with disabilities, covering various essential services such as medical care, long-term supports in home and community-based settings, and employment programs. However, one of the largest gaps in coverage for adults with disabilities is the coverage of comprehensive dental services under state Medicaid programs. As Dr. Brill rightly noted in his testimony, "dental decay is not an equal opportunity disease," but it impacts people with disabilities in higher rates, "compromis[ing] the health, development, and quality of life" of those individuals. Given the

importance of comprehensive dental care to treat and prevent dental decay and other forms of oral disease, the lack of coverage among states is highly problematic.

According to a 2021 survey of state Medicaid adult dental services coverage conducted by the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, while most states provide some form of dental coverage, three states provide no adult dental benefit at all, and nine states cover only emergency services.<sup>1</sup> This lack of full coverage is particularly troubling given that states may further reduce or eliminate dental benefits during a budget shortfall, which could have a severe impact on the health and wellbeing of people living in states with already limited coverage.

ANCOR supports the Medicaid Dental Benefit Act of 2023, introduced by Chair Cardin, which would improve the coverage of dental and oral health services for adults covered by Medicaid. We also appreciate the creation of a core set of adult oral health quality and equity measures, which will provide necessary data to ensure individuals are receiving the care they need and identify gaps in accessibility.

In addition to the lack of adequate coverage for dental care under state Medicaid programs, another hurdle to accessing comprehensive dental care for people with I/DD is the lack of providers. Even for those living in states with Medicaid coverage of services, there are low levels of dentist participation in Medicaid. According to a 2021 survey by the American Dental Association, only one out of three dentists sees at least one Medicaid patient in the course of a year, with just 18% of dentists seeing at least 100 Medicaid patients per year.<sup>2</sup>

There are many factors affecting provider participation in Medicaid, including low reimbursement rates.<sup>3</sup> For many dental providers, a barrier to participation is the lack of education and adequate training on how to best assist individuals with I/DD. ANCOR supports measures to improve education and training for dental providers, including support for partnerships among providers of dental care, health care, and long-term supports and services.

Thank you for highlighting the importance of better accessibility to dental care and for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record. ANCOR supports the work of this subcommittee to improve access to and coverage of dental care and looks forward to the opportunity to work with members on this issue. For questions or more information, please reach out to Elise Aguilar, Director of Federal Relations, at [eaguilar@ancor.org](mailto:eaguilar@ancor.org).

---

<sup>1</sup> Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, [Medicaid Coverage of Adult Dental Services](#) (Jan. 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Marko Vujicic, et al., [Dentist Participation in Medicaid: How Should It Be Measured? Does It Matter?](#), Health Policy Institute (Oct. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Niodita Gupta, et al., [Medicaid Fee-For-Service Reimbursement Rates for Child and Adult Dental Care Services for All States](#), Health Policy Institute (Apr. 2017).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "Elise Aguilar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elise" being more prominent than the last name "Aguilar".

Elise Aguilar  
Director of Federal Relations