

Preserve Oregon's Adult Dental Medicaid Benefit



Like many states, Oregon is facing a significant budget shortfall as a result of federal Medicaid funding reductions. However, Oregon's push in recent years to extend coverage to more Oregonians—more than half of all children and one in three adults in Oregon now have healthcare through Medicaid—means that our state has a greater reliance on federal funding that's being cut under Congress's recently passed HR 1.

Oregon is expected to lose a total of **\$9.4 billion** as a result of the bill, and the state is actively seeking ways to address an estimated **\$421 million** General Fund Budget gap for the coming biennium.



Eliminating or decreasing the adult dental benefit under Medicaid is not the solution to Oregon's budget challenges.

The elimination of Oregon's adult dental benefit would result in decreased access to care, unmet dental needs and greater health issues among Oregonians.

We've tried this before.

In 2003, Oregon eliminated specific adult dental coverage and imposing copayments on the remaining covered dental care. Those changes resulted in:

- More than 50,000 low-income beneficiaries becoming disenrolled
- Within 10 months, **Oregon saw increased healthcare costs**, negative impacts on healthcare access and utilization and adverse health outcomes
- **Emergency department visits increased** from 6,600 per month in 2002 to over 9,000 per month in 2004
- A 28 percent increase in utilization of ambulatory medical care for dental concerns, with a 26 percent increase in per person expenditures
- An increase in the use of non-emergency department ambulatory medical settings for dental problems



\$1.9 billion

Nationwide cost of removing adult Medicaid dental benefits, accounting for increased emergency department visits for dental conditions and unmet periodic dental conditions among pregnant beneficiaries with diabetes and coronary artery disease (Health Policy Institute)



\$51 million

Annual total increase in health care costs in Oregon as a result of removing the adult Medicaid dental benefit (Health Policy Institute)



12% Increase

in dental-related emergency department visits and an 8% increase in dental-related primary care visits after an emergency dental benefit in Maryland (American Dental Association).



> 50% decrease

in patients receiving dental services after elimination of Medicaid benefits in Massachusetts, with nearly all study respondents living with "serious medical needs" from untreated dental problems" (American Journal of Public Health, 2000 study)