



February 25, 2020

Dr. Richard Pan  
Senate Health Committee  
Senate Budget Committee, Subcommittee #3  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: OPPOSE ELIMINATION OF DENTAL MANAGED CARE PROGRAM IN L.A. COUNTY

On behalf of L.A. Care Health Plan, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Governor Newsom's budget proposal to eliminate the dental managed care program Los Angeles County known as LA PHP---a program that has been in place for decades.

As the nation's largest public plan, L.A. Care Health Plan serves more than two million beneficiaries throughout Los Angeles County enrolled in the following programs: Medi-Cal, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medi-Cal/Medicare dual-eligibles, In Home Supportive Services providers (IHSS), and California's state-based exchange (Covered California). As a public plan, it is L.A. Care's mission to provide access to quality health care for Los Angeles County's vulnerable and low-income communities and residents and to support the safety net required to achieve that purpose.

Since 2003, L.A. Care has provided more than \$12 million in grants for 130 projects that provide oral health infrastructure, education, prevention and treatment services to low-income communities. L.A. Care remains one of the largest supporters of coordinated oral health services in Los Angeles County, in part because of the strong connection between oral health and overall health.

**We believe the termination of dental managed care will cause significant disruption to beneficiaries and will make care coordination much more difficult in a fee-for-service environment. As the state is preparing for its next Medi-Cal waiver renewal and is relying more and more on managed care and the immense benefit that managed care brings to the state's most vulnerable populations, it makes the most sense to include a managed care dental benefit component in conjunction with the state's goal of moving to integrated whole-person care for most populations.**

In Los Angeles County, there are nearly 400,000 Medi-Cal beneficiaries that receive their dental benefit via managed care by approximately 1,600 dentists. This is a significant amount of people that would be moved into the fee-for-service program, causing substantial disruption and chaos. Additionally, many of these beneficiaries have or do rely upon the dental plans to case manage their often complex issues including special needs individuals. As studies and surveys have shown, dental access in the fee-for-service program is limited, with dental providers citing low reimbursement rates, administratively burdensome program requirements, and uneven geographic distribution of dentists. Attached is a document developed by LIBERTY Dental Plan, one of the three contacted dental plans, comparing utilization between the fee-for-service program and dental managed care.

We agree with Governor Newsom that the Los Angeles County dental benefit can be improved – and should be improved – in both dental managed care and the fee-for-service program. As the managed care pilot is 25 years old, it is time to consider the accomplishments and challenges of the pilot and move forward in improving the managed care program. **As a result, we respectfully request that the Administration, Legislature, DHCS and stakeholders build upon all the important work that has been accomplished in Los Angeles County rather than eliminating managed care. In fact, L.A. Care supports the integration of dental and physical health by embedding the dental benefit within the health plan, in a similar way that the pediatric dental benefit is embedded within Covered California’s Qualified Health Plans. We believe that embedding the benefit would support the Governor’s goals of CalAIM with full integration of managed care.**

L.A. Care believes managed care is able to offer more complete care coordination than is possible through a fee-for-service system. As a result, we respectfully oppose the Governor’s proposal to eliminate dental managed care in Los Angeles County.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [ccompartore@lacare.org](mailto:ccompartore@lacare.org) or 916.930.0043.

Sincerely,

*Cherie Compartore*

Cherie Compartore  
Senior Director, Government Affairs

Attachment