



San Juan Unified School District
Ralph Richardson Center
Telephone (916) 971-8094

May 22, 2020

To Members of the Senate Sub-committee on Health:

I am writing this letter in support of Sacramento County's Dental Managed Care program, which is proposed to be eliminated in the 2020-21 Department of Health Care Services budget. I am a school nurse in San Juan Unified School district. I provide support to a school which serves the district's most severely disabled students including those with developmental disabilities, severe autism, and many of whom are refugee families. Parents of students with severe disabilities often have difficulty finding dentists who can understand the unique issues of working with this population. One of my priorities has been working with the Center for Oral Health's (COH) Early Smiles Sacramento program. For the last four years, their hygienists have performed dental screenings for students (with parental consent) at my school. For students with an urgent dental concern, often involving pain, their staff will reach out to parents within a day. Together, we work to get these students to a dentist.

Often a student's needs are quite complex due to their fragile health and sedation dentistry is needed. I cannot stress how instrumental Danielle Cannarozzi and the Liberty Dental Community Outreach team has been in helping our families navigate this. Too often, when a child has multiple health issues, parents unfortunately put dental care as a lower priority. As you may know, untreated dental issues have the risk of causing systemic infection, often leading to emergency room visits, costlier care, and even hospitalization, not to mention a decrease in quality of life. Liberty has assisted families by finding an experienced dentist who provides sedation dentistry for these students and helped uninsured students be seen at low cost dental programs while insurance issues are being sorted out. Additionally, we have seen a great need for urgent dental care in our special needs immigrant and refugee populations. Liberty dental has been critical to help these families get the care they deserve. Put simply, these families will be profoundly impacted from the loss of this program.

I am mindful of the extraordinary circumstances the state of California is facing. However, my hope is that managed dental plans will continue to remain, rather than merge into a fee-for-service mode. Funding for these essential services should not be jeopardized. Please contact me at (916) 873-2851 if you have any questions and would like to know how school nurses utilize dental managed care services for our students. Thank you very much for your consideration of this vital program.

Sincerely,

Tara Melavic, RN

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SJUSD Credentialed School Nurse

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