

March 26, 2018

Pedro Nava, Chair  
C/o Little Hoover Commission  
925 L Street, Suite 805  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissioner Nava,

I was pleased to accompany Laurie James (grandparent) to the recent hearing regarding Denti-Cal on March 22, 2018. I would have liked to have stayed for Public Comments, but I had to leave for a medical appointment. So, instead, I am writing you a letter.

I wanted to give you a bit more insight into the world of Denti-Cal from another perspective. There were some very impressive questions asked from the Commissioners, and I feel a little more at ease that someone is listening. You see, I was the one who helped Laurie James find care for her twin grandchildren. I've worked for Public Health for over 15 years helping families find dental care for their children. Prior to working for Public Health I worked for the local hospital and the Rural Health Clinics, including Pediatrics.

Through the CHDP program (Child Health Disability & Prevention), families are contacted through the PM160 billing form from the medical providers. Sadly, that form is and will be discontinued soon from the Managed Care Plans. It is uncertain at this time exactly HOW those referrals will be received in the future. Those referral forms were the gap to care by alerting the local CHDP staff to contact the families and follow through with them for their child's dental care. We are in a smaller rural county, so fortunately our "relationships" with the CHDP medical community has always been positive. Then along comes managed care. There now was a huge shift in who does what and when for these families. Through partnerships, we are slowly getting back to how to deal with the "whole" child.

It was an enlightening experience to listen to the Dental profession talk about their challenges and successes. And, it was heartwarming listening to the questions posed by the Commissioners. I do believe that you all care and would like to get to the bottom of a positive solution in "FIXING DENT-CAL".

There are some very simple techniques to help educate parents, encourage children, build relationships with providers, and fill the gaps. One of the easiest ways to educate parents is by simply providing them with a washcloth to wipe their newborn/infant's gums from the very first day of life. As a home visitor and a Health Educator, through a program that was designed as "Baby Welcome Wagon" with funds from our local First 5, I share with the families how important it is to simply wipe the infant's gums twice a day.

This of course is to protect the gum surfaces by removing the bacteria that can be passed by simply kissing your baby, sharing items with the baby, etc. We talk about "First Tooth, First Birthday. It is also an opportunity to educate the families on Baby Bottle Tooth Decay.

I just had a home visit with a new father and his mother-in-law last week. Neither one of them had ever heard about wiping the gums. These are very simple ways to help prevent a child from one day entering a Dental Surgery Center. There is something to be said for "Prevention is the Best Medicine!" Education is a powerful tool.

I really liked when the Commissioner asked the Dentist, "Would it make a difference if there was a more open market to drive competition?" I was relieved to hear the biggest Denti-Cal provider say "YES". Yes, it would...but we need MORE dentists willing to take Denti-Cal for our Medi-Cal population.

Here in our small community, thankfully the largest medical Pediatric office took on FLOURIDE VARNISHING. We now hope to bring on more of the medical community to do the same.

I also work with California Children's Services (CCS). Trying to locate dentists to see our most vulnerable and physically handicapped children is often a nightmare. Specialized dentists are in demand. Our community must travel miles and miles to receive services.

I know these issues are not new to the Little Hoover Commission and I applaud your efforts! But we ALL need to do more with what we have until we can find more money to encourage more participation in the Dental community.

I wish I and others could line up every single child, pregnant woman, adult, and senior who has needed Denti-Cal. Then, let's line up every human being that became medically compromised by not receiving care in time. Just like the little boy whose grandmother took him to a dentist for emergency care when he stopped eating and the whole side of his face became swollen from infection. The problem was...it WASN'T a Denti-Cal dentist that saw the little boy and the grandmother was forced to pay out of pocket expenses. Luckily, I am a Soroptimist and we have a small fund called "Helping Hands". I was able to work with the dental office to reduce the fees and we covered the balance. Can you even imagine how scary that must have been for that grandmother?

Again, thank you Commissioner Nava. I appreciate this type of oversight and I truly HOPE that we can tackle how to do better!

Sincerely,



Donna J. Jackson  
Health Educator  
Amador County Public Health