



Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services
3 West Road, Virks Building, Cranston, RI 02920
phone: 401.462.5274 fax: 401.462.3677

May 5, 2026

Honorable Melissa A. Murray, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Senate Lounge, State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: S 2878 - An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions -- Dentists and Dental Hygienists

Dear Chairwoman Murray:

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and Medicaid would like to express its strong support for **S 2878** that permits reimbursement for public health dental hygienists (PHDH) from "other insurance" or a third-party payor such as Medicare. Current law allows PHDHs to submit claims and be reimbursed from Medicaid; however, it prohibits the reimbursement from other insurers for services rendered.

Since 2015, over 25,000 adults with Medicaid who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid have enrolled in Special Needs Plans which provide dental services. Plans like Medicare Advantage are administered through commercial carriers. Reimbursement from those carriers for services rendered by PHDH is prohibited. If enacted, this legislation would have no fiscal cost to the State of Rhode Island. In fact, H 7837 would provide immediate savings to the Medicaid program since it would expand coverage for those who may be enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan for dual-eligibles.

In 2015, Rhode Island created a new, dental professional licensure type, a PHDH, to provide dental services to populations with access challenges and to provide evidence-based dental preventive care and receive reimbursement from Medicaid for services rendered. Approximately seventy-one (71) PHDHs provide services and perform oral health assessments outside of the traditional dental office setting. PHDHs can provide such dental services in settings such as nursing homes, schools, senior centers, and group homes. Services would include preventive dental services such as cleanings, fluoride treatment, education and more.

If enacted, **S 2878** would increase access for vulnerable populations by allowing commercial health insurers to enroll and allow reimbursements for PHDHs that provide certain dental services. Currently, the Neighborhood Integrity plan includes a dental component administered by Delta Dental, and BlueRI for duals, administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI. If the proposed legislation passes, these organizations can improve oral health for their special populations where they live and allow for reimbursement of those services.

Currently, Medicaid beneficiaries with the special plans do have Medicaid as a secondary insurance and services with a PHDH could be performed and billed to Medicaid. Having these claims covered by the commercial insurer as the primary insurer would increase access to dental care by allowing adequate reimbursement for services rendered.

EOHHS/Medicaid current innovative pilot projects using PHDHs have strengthened and expanded access to much needed dental services to vulnerable populations. EOHHS has documented cases where the utilization of

PHDHs provides both preventive oral care in home settings while also guiding home health aides to provide effective daily mouth care. The goal of this proposed legislation is to improve the oral health of individuals who are not going to dental appointments due to access issues. Furthermore, if enacted the long-term implications of **S 2878** would go far beyond oral health since we know complications from the lack of access to this preventative service can lead to compounded and acute chronic medical conditions affecting the human body as a whole.

EOHHS fully supports the passage of this legislation that will enable all payors to be more innovative in their approach to improving the oral health of vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Charest', is positioned above the typed name.

Richard R. Charest, R.Ph., MBA
Secretary
Executive Office of Health and Human Services

CC: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Honorable Hanna M. Gallo
Kristen Silvia, Director of Legislation and Deputy Chief of Staff