



MINNESOTA HEAD START ASSOCIATION  
ESTABLISHED IN 1987



Representative Nick Zerwas  
Member, House Health and Human Services Reform Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
433 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 21, 2016

Dear Representative Zerwas,

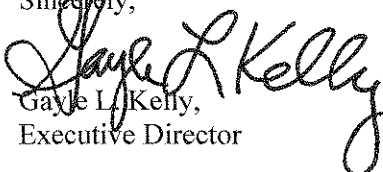
Thank you for introducing House File 2614 that will allow for Medicaid reimbursement for oral health assessments. The Minnesota Head Start Association supports your bill because we have firsthand experience of this approach benefiting families with young children that live in areas where there is a shortage of dentists or other dental access issues. This bill makes practical and financial sense because as you know:

- High risk populations experience the highest rates of dental disease yet are least likely to enter the dental care system through an exam in a dental office/clinic and,
- Earliest possible access to preventive and education services has the potential to reduce dental disease and public program costs.

Minnesota, with support from the Federal Center for Medicaid Services, has lead the way in expanding the scope of services of the dental workforce to improve utilization and encourage outreach and linkages with community –based care. Dental risk assessment is becoming the standard of care in clinical settings rather than one size fits all or benefit/coverage driven care. It also supports efforts to triage and prioritize needed care in outreach to low access communities. When all MHCP clients get access to dental assessment we will have taken a big step towards evaluating oral health outcomes.

Minnesota Head Start Association represents 33 Head Start programs (including 7 tribal nations and 1 migrant grantee) serving over 12,000 federally-funded and 2,100 state-funded Early Head Start and Head Start children and their families in Minnesota. Head Start creates strong outcomes in children's health and early learning. According to a 2008 evaluation report, Minnesota Head Start's initial experience with "assessment, triage and referral" by collaborative practice dental hygienists worked well for local Head Start programs with dental access issues. Assessments allow dental providers, programs and communities to more efficiently target their limited resources to address children with dental treatment needs. Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

  
Gayle L. Kelly,  
Executive Director