



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Licensing Dental Therapy

A.5373 (Woerner)/S.4428 (Fernandez)

April 30, 2024

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) is in strong support of A.5373 (Woerner)/S.4428 (Fernandez) which would enable New York to license and provide Medicaid reimbursement for dental therapy.

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) is the statewide primary care association representing all federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs). CHCs serve more than 2.3 million New Yorkers at over 800 sites each year. Among CHC patients – 89% live below 200% of the Federal poverty level, 68% are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), 28% speak limited or no English, 12% are uninsured, more than 4% are unhoused, and 68% are enrolled in Medicaid, CHIP, or are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid.

Located in medically underserved communities, CHCs are often the only source of affordable and accessible dental care. However, demand for dental care is growing amidst an unprecedented workforce crisis. CHCs struggle to recruit and retain dental providers due to an inability to compete with private practices for the limited pool of providers – a problem exacerbated by rising costs and inadequate reimbursement rates. This scarcity disproportionately impacts individuals who are low-income and BIPOC, who utilize less dental care than the rest of the population in part due to the limited availability of dental services.¹ An estimated 9 million New Yorkers are enrolled in a public health plan, while an estimated 1.2 million residents are uninsured.² Yet only 19% of dentists in New York participate in Medicaid.³ This is concerning as it is estimated that 1 in 5 people have an untreated dental issue.⁴ Dental issues result in higher risk of chronic disease, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.⁵

Currently, New York does not license and provide Medicaid reimbursement for dental therapy. Dental therapists are mid-level providers who can provide preventive and restorative care including health education, prophylaxis, x-rays, cavity fillings, temporary crown placements, and tooth extractions. Long-term studies have found that adding availability of these services increase usage of preventive dental services in medically underserved areas.⁶ In 2009, Minnesota became the first state to license dental therapy and many states have since followed suit, but New York continues to lag.⁷

CHCANYS strongly urges the New York State Legislature to pass A.5373/S.4428 to expand access to preventive dental services and address the increasing demand for dental services by licensing and providing reimbursement for dental therapy.

For more information, contact Marie Mongeon, Vice President of Policy: mmongeon@chcanys.org.

¹ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0234459#sec013>

² <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/pdf/health-insurance-coverage-in-new-york-state.pdf>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9274318/>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4765973/>

⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31560644/>

⁶ [https://www.chwsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CHWS Contributions of DTs ADTs at Apple Tree Dental 2020.pdf](https://www.chwsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CHWS_Contributions_of_DT%20ADTs_at_Apple_Tree_Dental_2020.pdf)

⁷ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/ruralhealth/emerging/dt/index.html>