



SACRAMENTO COUNTY Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee

December 4, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to the Proposal to Eliminate Proposition 56 Medi-Cal Dental Funding in the 2026-27 Budget

Dear Governor Newsom,

Please accept this letter as the Sacramento County Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee's (MCDAC) formal and unequivocal opposition to the proposed FY26-27 cuts to the Medi-Cal Dental Program—specifically, the elimination of approximately \$550 million in Proposition 56 supplemental payments to dental providers.

Eliminating Prop 56 funding directly undermines the will of California voters, who approved the measure in 2016 to expand access to oral health care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Since its implementation, Prop 56 has played a critical role in improving provider participation and reducing longstanding disparities in access to dental care. We urge you to honor the intent of the voters, preserve the progress made under Proposition 56, and reaffirm California's commitment to health equity and access to care for all.

California has seen historic progress in the Medi-Cal Dental program since Prop. 56 passed. Forty percent of California dentists are now enrolled as Medi-Cal providers, resulting in a 27 percent increase in new dental office visits by Medi-Cal patients. This equates to one million more Californians receiving dental care every year.

In Sacramento, the volume and quality of care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries have increased dramatically, with gains in the number of oral health providers accepting Medi-Cal. Sacramento County's historic reliance on dental specialists and surgery centers outside the county has also shifted, with a number of these providers establishing themselves in the County. In both cases, increases in access have created local economies of scale that allow a more cost-effective and competitive delivery system that emphasizes prevention.

The elimination of Proposition 56 funding poses a serious threat to the financial sustainability of providers serving high-need populations. Discussions within MCDAC following the proposed budget cuts indicate that Sacramento's ambulatory surgery centers will likely be unable to remain financially viable if they continue to serve Medi-Cal patients without the supplemental support provided by Prop 56. Additionally, many private dental providers who accept Medi-Cal may be forced to close their practices.

These sub-acute and acute care providers have warned MCDAC that, without access to timely oral health services, more patients will require hospital admissions—ultimately increasing costs to the state.

Already overburdened emergency departments will face additional strain as more children and families seek care for preventable oral infections and dental pain.

Sacramento Federally Qualified Health Centers anticipate the subsequent disease burden without access to higher levels of care even for those who continue to be covered by Medi-Cal, continued demand for care from patients who are now uninsured, and the existential quandary of an unsustainable payor mix paired with their mandate to provide access for all. These primary providers have cautioned MCDAC that patients will make increased use of emergency departments where they will receive transient relief, if any.

Finally, the Sacramento County Health and Human Services Agency's strategies, infrastructure and budgets will be increasingly challenged by unachievable initiatives, unsustainable costs for medically indigent people, and an impossible bureaucratic lift to keep up with changes in the cadence and criteria of eligibility determination.

More than half of California's children and a third of its adults depend on Medi-Cal for essential dental care. We strongly urge you to maintain Proposition 56 supplemental payments for dental providers.

Thank you for your attention and leadership. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and work toward a solution that preserves access to care. Please contact Jonathan Porteus, Executive Director of WellSpace Health at (916) 313-8413, with any questions.

Sincerely,

A. Jonathan Porteus, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer, WellSpace Health

Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee Chair

Julie Gallelo, MPH

Executive Director, First 5 Sacramento

Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee Vice-Chair

cc:

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Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee Members