

November 12, 2008

The Honorable Vincent P. Meconi, Chair
Delaware Health Fund Advisory Committee
Department of Health & Social Services
1901 N. DuPont Highway – Main Bldg.
New Castle, DE 19720

Dear Secretary Meconi:

I write on behalf of the State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) after review of the attached September 29, 2008 News Journal article regarding the Sussex dental clinic closure at our October Policy & Law meeting. Discussion ensued about the barriers to adult dental coverage in Delaware. As you know, the Delaware Medicaid program currently covers only children's dental care and the need for adult coverage is well documented. Consistent with the attached AARP article ["Nothing to Smile About: Too few Americans get oral health care, spawning a silent epidemic of dental disease"], an estimated 108 million Americans have no dental insurance, more than twice the number lacking health insurance. The article summarizes evidence that poor oral health may cause or worsen other conditions such as diabetes and cardio-vascular disease. Bacteria from chronic gum infection apparently spread to other organs through the bloodstream.

H.B. 359 was introduced in the 144th General Assembly to expand Delaware's Public Assistance Code to provide preventative and urgent dental care to all eligible Medicaid recipients. Payments for preventative or urgent dental care treatments would have been subject to a \$10.00 recipient co-pay and the total amount of dental care assistance provided to an eligible recipient would not have exceeded \$1,000.00 per year, except that an additional \$1,500.00 may be authorized on an emergency basis for urgent dental care treatments through a review process established by the State Dental Director. The proposed legislation never made it to the floor for a vote.

SCPD certainly realizes the current economic situation, but still encourages the Department to consider an initiative for adult dental coverage in its FY 10 budget. Consistent with the attachment from the National Conference on State Legislatures, as of August 2007, 46 states and the District of Columbia offer adult dental benefits of some kind.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniese McMullin-Powell
Chairperson
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

cc: Mr. Harry Hill
p&l dental coverage 11-08