

March 5, 2025

Senate Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Billinger and members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Lily Wakim, and I have a dental practice in Wichita. I want to tell you about a patient who has received care at my dental office for over 10 years. He is eighteen years old now, and he has had a very difficult home life. Over the years, I have watched him come into the office with his grandma and his sister. I have worked with him to learn the importance of oral hygiene and bodily hygiene. We have had to crown many of his teeth. Getting to know this person as a human instead of just a number was very important to me. While I do not have children of my own, I see the patient in my office as a chance to give back and help shape the lives of less fortunate youth. This patient now has a job at Jimmy John's and is in a relationship. There is a small part of me that smiles when I see him doing well for himself. There is still a lot of work to do, but I do believe that I have helped shape the course of his life as his dentist.

Our write offs are so severe for people with Medicaid coverage. I have completed over \$26,000 of work on this patient. We have received just shy of \$10,000. That is \$16,000 of treatment that I have written off due to how low our Medicaid reimbursement rates are. It is not feasible to run a small business with this much loss when I provide dental care for members of my community.

When I first started practicing with my dad at our dental office, I was not happy about seeing people with Medicaid coverage. He told me it was a service to the community and hoped that I would start to see it that way too. Dentistry is difficult. This patient base typically has kids whose lives are more difficult. They also tend to be extremely grateful for the care they receive. I have been humbled by my work. I graduated from UMKC and practiced for 4 years in Colorado. The last 4 years practicing dentistry here at home in Kansas have encouraged me to advocate for funding resembling our neighboring states. They are doing a better job of reimbursing a reasonable amount for dental care. It's time for the Kansas Medicaid dental rates to increase. Thank you.

Dr. Lily Wakim, DDS