

Kimberly Hammill
Levant

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 996. My name is Kimberly Hammill and I live in Levant.

The last year has been a nightmare. My teeth are crumbling out of my mouth. I need new dentures; the denture I am wearing is broken and is barely staying in place. I have had a temporary crown on a tooth for years too long. I struggle to pay for dental care for myself and also my daughter.

My daughter has TMJ (temporomandibular joint dysfunction), and needs regular access to a dentist due to chronic, severe jaw pain. She needs her wisdom teeth removed. She has a number of teeth in varying degrees of decay. Sometimes she's up in the night crying from the pain.

I work full time at a Mental Health Clinic and have a full roster of clients. I have anxiety about my dentures breaking while I am working with clients. It's an unnecessary, upsetting distraction. My daughter is a junior in college. Her graduation date and my bank account balance loom in my mind. I worry that her teeth will affect her opportunities once she graduates. I also know from experience that appearance is incredibly important when looking for a job. It also affects confidence and ability to communicate effectively in the workplace - my daughter covers her mouth when she smiles and speaks. She is self conscious.

I worry that poor dentition will affect my daughter's overall health. We are trying to come up with the money now to fix her teeth, which is estimated to cost our family thousands of dollars. We simply do not have it at this time. Knowing she is in such pain causes me emotional distress as her mother. With permission, I will submit cost estimates for both of our teeth for the work session. What average citizen could afford this amount?

The cycle of poverty is a central reason why dental is so inaccessible. My daughter will be blocked from getting ahead because our health care system does not see dental health as part of our overall health. Treating dental (and eye care) as if they are not essential elements of human health is ridiculous. People like my daughter are being set back and barred from opportunities because she is poor.

A person's smile is often the first thing that people see. A healthy set of teeth has a huge impact on an individual's confidence and sense of self-worth. Appearance is also known to have a direct impact on employment status and rate of pay. Please champion this issue this legislative session and vote ought to pass on LD966. Please look at my beautiful daughter, and find a way to fully fund her access dental health care.

Thank you for your consideration

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