

To: Bridge Program Task Force

From: Members of the CCO Oregon oral health workgroup

Date: June 14, 2022

Re: Dental benefit coverage in the Bridge Program

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We appreciate that HB 4035 encouraged the Bridge Program Task Force to include dental in the recommended coverage package. Further, we are pleased that a dental representative is on the Task Force and that time has been spent discussing dental in the Task Force meetings.

At the May 24th meeting, many Task Force members mentioned the importance and value of including dental coverage in the Bridge Program and we agree. The Oregon Health Plan (OHP) covers preventive and comprehensive care in addition to emergency dental care for adults and children. Under federal code, a Bridge Program must only cover the Essential Health Benefits (EHB), which does not include comprehensive dental coverage for adults. Oregon went above the federal expectations for the OHP population, and we support doing the same for those Oregonians that enroll in the Bridge Program.

Oral health is central to overall health and quality of life. Data shows that many adults without comprehensive dental coverage do not access preventive care due to prohibitive costs. And we know that untreated disease and pain often leads to unnecessary emergency department visits<sup>1</sup>, which further drives up costs. Additionally, a recent study showed a correlation between access to dental coverage for Medicaid-enrolled adults and a reduction in the prevalence of tooth decay and cavities in children of the same family<sup>2</sup>.

For all these reasons and more, we recommend that the Task Force ensure continuity of coverage and care for those Oregonians that may “churn” on and off the OHP, regardless of age, and expand the coverage offered by a Bridge Program beyond the EHBs to include comprehensive dental coverage for all eligible Oregonians.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-and-medicare-enrollees-need-dental-vision-and-hearing-benefits>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.01135>