Lifelong Health Starts with A Healthy Mouth
Support Pediatric Oral Health Now!

S.1164 and HB.624 An Act Relative to Early Childhood Cavities
Sponsored by State Senator Harriett Chandler and State Representative John Sciback

Background:
Pediatric dental cavities impact child health and development, self-esteem, and learning. Cavities result in unhealthy adult teeth and high costs for dental treatment throughout life.

Pediatric oral health experts at Boston Children's Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital in Rhode Island have found a better way to prevent and treat cavities in young children. They developed a model that has shown that more frequent preventive visits in high-cavity risk children, including more frequent fluoride treatments, along with enhanced patient and parent education can:

- Greatly reduce the percentage of patients with new cavities;
- Markedly reduce referrals to the operating room;
- Decrease patients’ pain dramatically; and
- Result in significant dental and medical cost savings

Each dollar invested in the disease management program resulted in an estimated $10 savings over one year

This approach has been in tested over 30 sites nationwide, including Holyoke Health Center, and the preliminary results are encouraging.

Insurance Barriers to Pediatric Oral Health for High Risk Patients:
Unfortunately, this model cannot be currently expanded because dental insurers, including MassHealth, will not reimburse for more than two preventive visits annually.

MassHealth, which insures 40% of the Commonwealth’s children, is the ideal insurer to expand this model, because it covers both dental and medical expenses, and therefore will reap the savings as well as incur the relatively minor costs.

What this legislation will do:
The proposed legislation will require EOHHS to design a statewide pilot program through MassHealth program for the enhanced managed of early childhood cavities, and recruit dental providers in both urban and rural areas to participate in the pilot.

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