

## House Bill 4127

# Ensuring Oregon children grow up healthy and ready to learn.



### **In Oregon, kids come first. We believe that all children deserve the chance to succeed in school and in life.**

Through legislation like Cover All Kids, we've made good progress to ensure all kids have access to the health care they need to reach their full potential. But there's still more work to do.

Oregon has one of the highest rates of childhood dental disease in the nation. Nearly half of the kids in our state will have a cavity by age nine, and about two of every five of those cavities will go untreated. This is not just an inconvenience—untreated cavities cause pain and can lead to infection that spreads to the rest of the body.

Dental care plays a vital role in keeping kids healthy and putting them on a path to success and yet preventive services remain out of reach for too many Oregon families. Low-income children, kids of color, and children from rural communities are impacted the most by gaps in access to dental care.

### **Poor Oral Health:**

#### **Harms the long-term health and wellbeing of Oregon's kids.**

Poor dental health has damaging effects on the overall health and development of kids, putting them at risk for serious issues down the road like heart disease, diabetes, respiratory infections and more. Childhood dental disease is largely preventable—no child should have to suffer from needless pain.

#### **Drives absenteeism in Oregon schools.**

Dental pain is a leading cause of absenteeism. Children struggle to eat, sleep, and learn when their mouths are hurting. Research shows that kids suffering from dental disease are more likely to miss school and have lower grades, putting their futures at risk.

#### **Undermines the economic security of families.**

With better access to preventive care in childhood, Oregonians can avoid dental emergencies that develop later in life. Dental pain is the second most frequent reason adults visit the emergency department. Emergency departments are the most expensive care setting, yet they are the least equipped to treat underlying causes of dental disease. No family should face medical debt as a result of dental issues that, with the right services, can be prevented.

**About Healthy Teeth, Bright Futures:** We are a coalition of philanthropic organizations, health plans, educators, health equity and social justice groups and health care providers coming together to advocate for children's dental health. Together, we are strengthening families and kids by ensuring that every Oregon child has access to preventive dental services at school.

### **Children of color in Oregon are at higher risk.**

**Percentage of kids in Oregon with cavities, by community:**

**72%**

**Native Hawaiian/  
Pacific Islander**

**64%**

**Hispanic or Latino**

**59%**

**Asian**

**50%**

**Black/African American**

**43%**

**White**

*Note: data is from 2017 Smile Survey*

**Healthy Teeth  
Bright Futures**

# School-based programs give more Oregon kids access to preventive care.

## Over the last five years, thousands of Oregon kids have received critical dental health services where they are—in their schools.

The Children's Dental Health Initiative, funded by several philanthropic partners, has helped bring a wide array of dental services to 22,000 kids in 275 Oregon schools. School personnel have responded to the need for care and partnered with the dental programs to prevent disease and get kids connected to care.

With the Children's Dental Health Initiative about to sunset in 2020, it's time to leverage the infrastructure that has been created and integrate this powerful model into Oregon's health care delivery system.

## Efficient screenings and timely treatment.

School-based programs ensure kids get screened and are referred to a dentist for care. Dental professionals apply sealants to molars to protect the teeth as well. Families get help making appointments and having their children seen by a dentist when treatment is needed. Coordinated care ensures services are provided efficiently while families are supported in getting their kids the care they need.

## Reduces costly care.

The cost of treating nontraumatic dental problems for children and adults in Oregon's emergency rooms is approximately \$8 million per year. Providing greater access to preventive dental services will mean fewer children going to emergency rooms and fewer Oregonians in debt.

## Strengthens Oregon's future.

Improving access to quality, affordable dental services supports the economic security of families, reduces the risks of serious health problems, and increases opportunities for higher incomes later in life. Oregon is stronger when all families are healthy and economically secure.

## HB4127 moves us in the right direction by:

**Directing the Department of Education**, in consultation with the Oregon Health Authority, to develop oral health curriculum standards, to be incorporated within health curriculum standards when they are next updated.

**Directing the Oregon Health Authority** to apply to the Health Resources and Services Administration for a grant to support care coordination for school-based dental programs, with a focus on reaching kids who experience health disparities.

**Ensure that Oregon's CCOs and Public Health agencies** can continue to support coordination of school-based oral health programs so that children can participate and receive appropriate follow-up care.

**About Healthy Teeth, Bright Futures:** We are a coalition of philanthropic organizations, health plans, educators, health equity and social justice groups and health care providers coming together to advocate for children's dental health. Together, we are strengthening families and kids by ensuring that every Oregon child has access to preventive dental services at school.

## Over the last five years, the programs:



provided services to over  
**22,000 kids**



worked in over  
**275 Oregon schools**



reduced emergency room  
visits costing  
**\$8 million per year**

**It's time to make dental care a fundamental part of our approach to keeping kids healthy.**

**HealthyTeethOregon.org**  
For more information contact  
Tom Holt, consultant for Oregon  
Community Foundation, at  
tom@theholtcompany.com or  
503-956-7461

**Healthy Teeth  
Bright Futures**