



## **Testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health**

Presented by  
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Lansing, Michigan

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Ingham County Health Department  
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Good afternoon Chairman Kahn and members of the committee. My name is Karlene Ketola and I am here today representing the 140 members of the Michigan Oral Health Coalition. Our Coalition's membership includes consumers, dentists, hygienists and dental assistants as well as universities, community health centers, dental benefit providers, professional associations and local health departments who together work to improve the oral health of Michigan's residents.

On July 1, 2009, the Medicaid adult dental benefit was eliminated by Executive Order 09-22. Medicaid currently covers only emergency dental services for adults, such as extractions. For FY 2011, the Michigan Oral Health Coalition requests that Michigan's most vulnerable—persons with disabilities; the elderly; the highly impoverished; and poverty-stricken pregnant mothers—receive an annual maximum Medicaid adult dental benefit of \$600. This benefit would provide Michigan's most vulnerable adults with basic oral health care. I would now like to introduce Dr. Stephen Pittel, Dentist with the Ingham County Health Department.

Good afternoon Chairman Kahn and committee members. My name is Dr. Stephen Pittel and I have been practicing dentistry since 1982. In that time, I've owned and operated a private dental practice in Warren, Michigan and have served as the Chief Dental Officer with the Michigan Air National Guard. Both of these professional endeavors have provided me with diverse dental experiences. I have provided general dental services at the Ingham County Health Department, which is a federally qualified health center, since November 2008. In the past several months, I have seen the devastating effects of poor oral health care on children and adults and the elimination of the Medicaid adult dental benefit.

Dr. Pittel's Personal Observations:

- Urgent Care/Triage Dentistry: Emergency Room vs. Dental Office
- Cost Effective Dentistry
- Chronic Disease Oral Health Connection
- Immediate and Long Term Oral Health Goals
- Access to Care
- Difficulty in Recruiting Dentists

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Michigan Oral Health Coalition, we ask that Michigan's most vulnerable adults receive an annual Medicaid adult dental benefit of \$600. The estimated cost for this benefit is approximately \$4 million, which would bring in \$10.8 million in federal match funding. We urge you to keep Medicaid recipients out of the emergency room for their dental care and get Michigan's oral health providers back to work. Thank you.