



April 23, 2023

Dear Chair Daugherty and members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Children's Hospital Colorado, the patients and families, and communities we serve, we are writing to respectfully ask for your **vote in support of SB24-142 Oral Health Screenings in Schools Pilot Program** that will ensure more young children have access to preventive oral health screenings across Colorado.

Children's Hospital Colorado is proud to partner with the community to advocate for the health and well-being of kids and families. Our work goes beyond our hospital walls and into the communities we support. In addition to our patient care, Children's Hospital Colorado supports families by providing care coordination, advocacy and facilitating access to community programs and resources.

Untreated dental decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and a majority of children who experience dental decay are first affected between the ages of six through eight. Forty percent of children in kindergarten and fifty five percent of children in third grade have a history of dental decay. Untreated dental decay in children adversely affects school performance, and contributes to overall physical and mental health complications for children. Children who have poor oral health often miss more school and receive lower grades than children who don't.

SB24-142 represents one tool that the state of Colorado can deploy to ensure improved oral health screenings and prevention for Colorado's kids in early school grades. Everyday there are students experiencing dental pain that affects their ability to learn. Through dental screenings, we have identified students in which every single tooth had a cavity and yearly, numerous students requiring dental treatment in the operating room due to the level of their disease. We need to address this health disparity so that all Colorado children can thrive.

We applaud the efforts of the legislature to improve access to oral health screenings thru SB24-142, and we also recognize there are additional barriers that children and families face in accessing timely oral health care. After a screening occurs, barriers that a family can face can include a lack of oral health providers in their area, and lack of oral health providers who take their insurance, especially providers who take Medicaid. Closing the referral loop and ensuring children have access to a provider who takes their insurance are important elements to improving oral health outcomes for Colorado's kids. We hope that the data collected through SB24-142 can help the state make future decisions about where to target additional resources related to oral health care.

Thank you for your continued support of the health and wellbeing of Colorado kids. In this effort we encourage you to vote in favor of SB24-142 to improve access to oral health screenings for Colorado's young children.

Sincerely,

Karen Wells, RDH  
Clinical Program Coordinator,  
School-Based Dental Clinic and Oral Health Outreach  
Children's Hospital Colorado

Julie Wilken, MPS, RN  
Clinical Manager, School Health Program  
Children's Hospital Colorado  
13123 E 16th Ave, Aurora, CO 80045

