

Subject: ODA Fall Advocacy Updates

As summer winds down and fall approaches, your ODA advocacy team is turning an even greater focus toward the 2027 Legislative Session, scheduled to kick off on January 19. While three months may seem like a long time from now, September and October are when things really begin to ramp up for our lobby team.

Below, you'll find updates on our team's preparations for the 2027 Legislative Session, and specific healthcare issues we are engaging in already on our members' behalf.

Adult Dental Medicaid Benefit: While the [Medicaid Advisory Group report](#) did list the option of reducing or eliminating the adult dental benefit to assist in balancing the state budget, ODA has maintained its advocacy position that reductions or removal of the adult Medicaid dental benefit are not the way to address state healthcare budget gaps. Our advocacy team has been meeting with legislators, sharing with them the proven negative impacts of adult dental benefit reductions in both Oregon and other states.

September Legislative Days

In early September, Oregon Legislators reconvened for three days in the Capitol largely to attend informational hearings and updates from agencies charged with implementing recent legislation. Some forecasting was done, as September 11th also marked the pre-session bill filing deadline. Those bill drafts are not expected to be released to their Sponsor till late November and early December (the deadline to file them is December 1st). We hear that over 3,300 legislative concepts were presented for drafting on September 11th - marking a 20% increase from previous Sessions. Below is an overview of activity of interest:

OHA Agency Request Budget

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has released their [requested budget](#) for the 27/29 biennium. In the cover letter, OHA stated:

The 2027-2029 biennium will be particularly consequential for OHA. The impacts of H.R. 1 will be felt in every community in Oregon and across our health care system. Similarly, changes to the Healthier Oregon program and transition to a state-based marketplace will shift where, when, and how OHP members seek care. Plainly put, OHA, our partners, our leaders, and those we serve must now contend with the greatest threat to health care access and affordability that our state has ever faced.

This budget is nearly 2000 pages long and encompasses \$42.3B in requests (\$7.4B in State General Funds) and includes several Policy Option Packages, which are suggestions to the Legislature, as well as proposed reductions.

Proposed Reductions: The budget document also included possible reductions, including:

- Reduction of Healthcare Provider Incentive Program, which is currently available to dental providers. The draft budget includes up to a 40% reduction. OHA states:
 - *The Health Care Provider Incentive Program provides financial and non-financial supports to bring more primary care, oral health, and behavioral health providers to rural and underserved communities. It does this by offering financial help—like loan repayment, loan forgiveness, scholarships, and malpractice insurance subsidies, and other supports that help students build their careers. The program has a strong track record. More than 90% of providers who receive loan repayment and forgiveness stay in their rural communities for up to five years after their service commitment ends. The program also supports a more diverse workforce: based on available data, nearly 40% of participating students and providers identify as people of color or Tribal members. A 13% budget reduction (3.3M) would affect about 150 students and providers. A 27% reduction (7.9M) would affect 350 students and providers. Altogether, a 40% reduction (11.2M) would greatly limit the program's ability to maintain these outcomes and support rural and underserved communities*

Foreign Trained Dentist Proposal

There is legislative interest in a concept related to foreign trained dentists practicing in Oregon. The current interest is in the Virginia Model (foreign trained dentists → hygienist). Legislators have been having conversations with the Board of Dentistry, which has that this pathway does not necessarily require legislation, and that the Board can accomplish this if they receive a proposal. Legislators are planning to pull a proposal together this fall, and ODA's lobby team has offered to assist with the project.

OHA Work Requirements Notice—Tools for Partners

Congress' HR 1 included work requirements for Medicaid eligibility. Requirements apply to adults ages 19-64 who do not meet an exception. These work requirements are set to come online in January 2027. OHA sent out a notice about these requirements to 600,000 Medicaid enrollees earlier this month. The notices going out this month are informational only and no action is required yet; however, OHA is urging members to keep their contact

information up to date, so they don't miss these notices or future updates. OHP members can do that by:

- Going to benefits.oregon.gov
- Calling 1-800-699-9075 (all relay calls welcome),
- Downloading the ONE mobile app, or
- Visiting a local [Oregon Department of Human Services \(ODHS\) office](#)

Community partners are encouraged to help spread the word about upcoming changes by sharing flyers, social media posts, and information available at:

<https://ohp.oregon.gov/toolkit>.

ODA Advocacy: Aetna Reverses Course on Elimination of Paper Checks and EOBs

Thanks, in part, to advocacy from ODA and member dentists who sent letters of opposition, Aetna Denial has rescinded their decision to discontinue paper checks and paper Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statements for out-of-network providers. This change would have put additional administrative and financial burdens on dental practices and limited providers' ability to choose how they received claim payments. Thank you to those of you who sent letters to Aetna encouraging them to reconsider this harmful policy change. This reversal is proof that *your voice matters* and that *advocacy works!*

More detailed legislative updates and general political updates, provided by ODA's contract lobbying team, Dalton Advocacy, can be viewed in the Dalton Advocacy report.