

Story of Kim Rice, Legislative District 17

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Presented in Support of HB 2226 and SB 6126

House Health Care and Wellness Committee, January 19, 2012, 10am

Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee, January 19, 2012, 1:30pm

Kim Rice raised three kids on a tight budget. Their father died when they were young, so it was up to her to provide what they needed.

“If it was a choice of me getting a cavity filled or my son getting shoes for school, my son got shoes. I didn’t have the money to buy dental insurance or pay to go to the dentist for myself. The big problem is that people like me don’t have the money to get their teeth drilled and filled, so they have to wait until the point of an emergency.”

Over the years Kim found herself going to the emergency room herself when her own toothaches turned into infections.

Recently, Kim’s lack of dental care posed a new problem. She finally got a diagnosis after six years of disabling pain that hobbled her ability to walk and work: severe arthritis in her hip. In October her doctor told her she needed an immediate hip replacement.

But first, since bacteria in the mouth can threaten parts of the



For more information please contact Jen Estroff, Government Relations Director, Jen@childrensalliance.org or 509-859-2012.

body made vulnerable by surgery, a dentist needed to examine her teeth.

She borrowed the \$40 to pay to have a dentist take a look. Unfortunately, the news was bad. The dentist said there was a minor infection in the teeth, and they would have to be removed. Any infection increased the risk of the surgery, and she couldn't go forward with the operation until the teeth were removed.

“They said it would cost \$350 for the three extractions. I don't have \$350, and I have no way to get it. Here I am, I need the surgery, I'm in pain, but I can't get the surgery. It was a massive roadblock.”

Kim couldn't turn to her family for help. What resources her family has to spare they are already contributing to take care of her sister, who is suffering from cancer.

Thankfully, Kim's social worker was able to get her treatment at the Southwest Free Clinic, and in January she was able to get the teeth extracted. Soon she hopes to schedule the surgery that could enable her to walk and work again. But her oral health problems, the result of inadequate care for decades, aren't over.

“I have an upper plate, but I have no way to pay to get a lower plate. It affects all aspects of my life; my ability to eat, to get work, and my self-esteem. I sing and play guitar- but it's hard to sing with no teeth.”

Kim supports the creation of a Licensed Dental Practitioner in Washington. “It's about what the people need. It's hard to get dental care, and this new provider could fill the gap and reach more people who need preventative care so they don't face the kind of problems I am facing.”

For more information please contact Jen Estroff, Government Relations Director, Jen@childrensalliance.org or 509-859-2012.

Written Testimony of Lori Brothers, Legislative District 24

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Presented in Support of HB 2226 and SB 6126

House Health Care and Wellness Committee, January 19, 2012, 10am

Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee, January 19, 2012, 1:30pm

I'm a 39-year-old single mother working full time, and I have no dental insurance. Because of an autoimmune disorder, my mouth produces very little saliva, which is your mouth's natural defense and cleansing agent.

Even though I brush my teeth twice a day, I have to live with my teeth chipping away. It makes me very sad to say this, but I just don't want to smile anymore.

I can't afford to go to the dentist, it is just too expensive. I think passing House Bill 2226/ Senate Bill 6126 would be great for people like myself. Maybe someday I will be able to smile big again.



Picture of Lori's mouth, taken January 12, 2012

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Written testimony of Lorie Kavaklian, Legislative District 24

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Presented in Support of HB 2226 and SB 6126

House Health Care and Wellness Committee, January 19, 2012, 10am

Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee, January 19, 2012, 1:30pm

My name is Lorie Kavaklian and I live in Grays Harbor, where very few dentists take dental insurance covered by the state. I have had to travel a long way to get basic, affordable dental care in the Tacoma and Lakewood areas.

My dental problems gave me chronic sore throats and on-going headaches. In order to resolve my health issues, I had to have all my upper teeth and all my back bottom teeth pulled and replaced with dentures.

Last January, just as I had almost gotten this work finished, my Medicaid dental coverage was deleted. My dentist would not see me anymore. My dentures were ordered for me, but never fitted. They put my top dentures in the mail, and I was not educated about how to wear them or take care of them. They don't fit, but I try to wear them anyway. The bottom partial costs \$300, and I can't afford that, let alone pay for a dental visit for a proper fitting.

As of now, it is painful to chew. I eat soft foods. If I want to eat meat, I must pull the meat with my fingers. The only place in my area that provides dental care for adults is SeaMar, but they do not cover what I need. My 5-year-old daughter has dental coverage through the Apple Health for Kids program, and SeaMar is the only place where she can receive dental care.

People in my part of the state are in real need of an affordable solution to their dental needs. Please support House Bill 2226 / Senate Bill 6126.

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