

Written Testimony of Elisa Dack, RDH, MHSA
SUPPORT of Senate Bill 280
August 30, 2023

Hello, I am Elisa Dack, I am a registered dental hygienist and community health director for District Health Department No. 2 and District Health Department No. 4. I serve eight counties in Northeast Michigan. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 280, Pre-K Oral Health Assessment. This bill opens the resources for schools and preschools to have pre-k and kindergarten children provided an oral health assessment by a licensed dentist, dental therapist or registered dental hygienist who can operate under a PA 161 and mobile dentistry license. This program aligns with hearing and vision, providing needed assessments to determine whether children have outstanding health issues and need connection to care at an early age.

I am new to my public health role as of November '22 and took the course of working mostly with Head Start programs in my eight counties to provide these oral health assessments this spring. Previously, I was in private practice for over 20 years, and I am aware of the demographics and lack of dental professionals participating in children's Medicaid in our area. This being newer legislation, there were many questions as to the invasiveness of this procedure. The screening itself only takes 1-2 minutes but provides a wealth of information. We use a disposable mirror to look and check for missing teeth, extra teeth, cavities, infections, oral tissue defects, adult teeth erupting and if they have sealants and more. I found the family service coordinators from Head Start to be beyond grateful for the detail in the screenings, infection control, HIPPA policies, organization, and education, but most important the follow up provided to find these children a dental home, or if needed-acute care. These directors are so appreciative they have asked me to speak at Family Café's about the kindergarten oral screenings and the importance of every child having this assessment at a young age. This program eases children who have never seen a dentist, and they are more comfortable. I have attached a picture of myself doing these screenings at a Head Start facility and have included letters of support from Head Start.

The current legislation is a barrier to seeing all children to be sure they have optimal dental care and a dental home with active consent needed from parents. For example, you may be familiar with the Whittemore-Prescott area, it is in between West Branch and Tawas. This has been a statistically lower socio-economic area with little access to care. I scheduled their Head Start program for assessments with 33 children in the classroom. Only 14 of these children had the assessment due to parents having to sign the consent form with "opt-in". All 14 of these children had active cavities with four having infections. The needed change to "opt-out" would have allowed me to see all 33 kids. Can you imagine what a difference that would have been made for the other 19 children.

I truly appreciate each one of you for taking the time to hear my testimony and support for Bill 280. I love public health and am passionate about providing oral health to the wonderful families in my area starting with oral screenings at a young age as a first line of defense.

Thank you,
Elisa Dack, RDH, MHSA

Highlights



Kristina Messer

Admin 3h · 📷



DHD#2 Dental Hygienist Ms. Elisa visited today! She gave a presentation to the class and did exams on a couple of students



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