GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1995

SENATE BILL 823

Short Title: Improve Access/Dental Medicaid/Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Lucas and Forrester.

April 25, 1995

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

Referred to: Appropriations

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES TO INCREASE THE RATE OF MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT FOR DENTAL PROCEDURES.

Whereas, many North Carolinians who are eligible for Medicaid are not receiving vitally needed dental services under the State's Dental Medicaid Program; and

Whereas, a large percentage of these North Carolinians are children with conditions ranging from trauma requiring restorations, to baby bottle rampant tooth decay requiring sedation or general anesthesia for treatment, to cellulitis, an extensive dental infection which sometimes spreads to the upper face or the throat and upper chest requiring hospitalization if not treated early; and

Whereas, relatively low-cost preventive and restorative dental care can reduce the need for more costly care after unattended conditions worsen; and

Whereas, access to dental care for needy North Carolinians is severely limited by low Medicaid reimbursement rates for dental procedures, rates that most times do not even cover an average dentist's office overhead expenses; and

Whereas, historically, North Carolina's Dental Medicaid Program expenditures as a percentage of the State's total Medicaid expenditure has decreased from 3.53% in 1980, 2.10% in 1983, 1.52% in 1987, 1.34% in 1993, to 1.29% in 1994; and

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Whereas, nationally, it is estimated that more than 5% of the total of all personal health care expenditures, including individual, insurance, and government payments, are for dental services; and

Whereas, additional funding for North Carolina's Dental Medicaid Program will allow better reimbursement rates that can increase participation by dentists and help improve access for those who need dental care; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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Section 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Human Resources, Division of Medical Assistance, the sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars (\$1,200,000) for the 1995-96 fiscal year and the sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars (\$1,200,000) for the 1996-97 fiscal year to improve reimbursement rates for the Dental Medicaid Program.

Sec. 2. This act becomes effective July 1, 1995.