



**CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE RETARDED**  
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April 6, 2005

The Honorable Hector De La Torre, Chair  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **Budget Item 4260** - Department of Health Services - Medi-Cal.  
**April 11** - Hearing of Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services

Dear Assemblymember De La Torre:

On behalf of the California Association for the Retarded, I am writing to express opposition to elements of the Department of Health Services' (DHS) Medi-Cal Redesign as part of the proposed Governor's Budget for 2005-06. CAR is a nonprofit statewide organization with 10 local units that include family advocacy organizations, operators of day programs, and parent groups at state developmental centers.

**Reduction in Dental Benefits:** CAR opposes the Governor's Budget proposal to establish a \$1,000 per adult annual limit on Medi-Cal dental benefits. People with developmental disabilities are particularly prone to chronic and difficult to treat dental problems. We understand that the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) estimates that 1,680 regional center consumers would be affected by this proposed cap, resulting in a General Fund savings to the Medi-Cal program of \$1.1 million in 2005-06. If these services are not available through Medi-Cal, however, existing law would require that regional centers provide them at 100 percent state cost through DDS.

An additional problem with this proposed cap is that existing Medi-Cal rates for dental services (so-called Denti-Cal), already are 40 to 50 percent below the usual and customary fees charged by dentists. These low rates make it very difficult for Medi-Cal beneficiaries in general and regional center clients in particular to find dentists who are willing and able to treat them. The \$1,000 annual cap on dental services would make it even more difficult for these individuals to find and receive adequate dental treatment and prevention care.

**Expansion of Medi-Cal Enrollment in Managed Care.** CAR recommends the Legislature direct the Department of Health Services to provide information on consumer access to care and efficacy of care when the department expands enrollment in managed care in 35 counties. Even though the department intends to implement new projects and protocols as part of its managed care expansion, we are concerned about the overall effect of the proposal on people with developmental and other disabilities. These individuals often have severe, unique and difficult to manage conditions and may find it hard to find appropriately trained and available health care providers within a managed care system. For this reason, it is imperative that the department periodically monitor the effect of the new delivery system on patient care and report its findings to the Legislature during the period of proposed implementation.

We appreciate your attention to these issues as the Legislature fashions its response to the Medi-Cal Redesign project.

Sincerely,

Marion Lieberman, President

cc: Members of Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services