

September 30, 2025

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Dear Members of the OCI Committee,

I am writing a letter in opposition of the proposed acquisition of Delta Dental of Wisconsin, Inc and Wyssta Insurance Company, Inc. As a part-time faculty at Wisconsin's only dental school and one of the few periodontists in the state of Wisconsin that still accepts any dental insurance, I hope to provide additional testimony for the committee and public to consider.

The disease I specialize in, periodontal disease, has now been linked to countless systemic conditions. Including heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases, low-birth weight and pre-term birth in pregnant women, Alzheimer's disease, ED, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, and blood cancers. I will spare the committee a long lecture, but my emphasis here is to remind everyone that providing good quality dental care leads to more than a pretty smile. Having a healthy mouth improves overall quality of life and overall health.

Up until July 1<sup>st</sup>, I was quite proud of that fact that my office was in network with Delta Dental. I have seen the gratitude in my patients' eyes that drive over 3 hours to see me. With my office, they can afford the life-altering treatment of their periodontal disease. They can keep their teeth, lower their blood pressure, improve their A1c, and, together, we can accomplish their health goals. As a business, does this relationship with Delta Dental "hurt my bottom line?" Yes, I accept lesser fees for my services by being in network. However, the benefit of being a critical access point for patients in need has always been more important. This potential merger puts that relationship in jeopardy.

I have been informed that access to care is one of Delta Dental's justifications behind their acquisition. I would ask the committee and public to consider the facts. This merger introduces competition between an insurance company and the very providers that are under contract with them. This will not increase access to care. Instead, it will generate contempt between the two parties and decrease Wisconsinite's ability to get the care they need. In addition, I ask the following questions, has Delta Dental made the same sacrifices I have made in my practice? I have accepted a reduced fee schedule, but has Delta made sure that their premiums go back to their policy holders? Do their policy holders know that some of those premiums are now being used to buy dental practices for a for-profit portion of a business? This committee has the real opportunity to prevent what I argue will be the biggest threat to the dentist-patient care relationship that our state has ever seen. I implore the committee and the public to consider the gravity of this situation and, instead of putting up barriers and competition, work together to improve dentist's ability to improve the overall health of Wisconsinites.

Respectfully,



Austin Michael Dodge, DDS, MS, board certified periodontist