

May 19, 2010

The Honorable Thomas Harkin
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

We applaud your leadership in recognizing that oral health is central to overall health. As a key champion of oral health on the HELP Committee, you along with many of your colleagues included a number of groundbreaking provisions promoting oral health in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). We are asking you to extend your leadership as Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services to ensure that these provisions are realized with sufficient funding in FY'11.

Virtually all dental disease can be prevented yet half of all kindergarteners enter school with visible tooth decay that can affect their ability to eat, sleep and learn. Given your unparalleled commitment to prevention, we encourage you to robustly fund the following oral health programs in FY'11:

Oral Health Prevention–

- Oral Health Prevention Public Education Campaign – The Secretary was directed to begin planning a five-year national public education campaign in March of this year, focused on prevention and education and targeted oral health improvements for specific populations including young children, pregnant women, and individuals with disabilities. We urge you to invest \$5 million in FY'11 as authorized to ensure that this long overdue public education campaign gets fully off the ground by 2012.
- Dental Caries Disease Management – The Secretary is directed to award grants to demonstrate the effectiveness of research-based dental caries disease management, specifically to develop and promote strategies that address suppression of early childhood tooth decay. We urge you to set aside at least \$8 million in FY'11 for dental caries disease management grants, which will help insurers, health professionals, and communities, invest in earlier, smarter, more targeted interventions in dental caries to effectively transfer science to practice.
- School-Based Sealant Programs – Currently, the CDC funds only 16 states to carry out school based sealant programs. The new health reform law requires that ALL states - as well as territories and Indian tribes - receive grants for school-based dental sealant programs. To support this requirement, CDC will need at least \$15 million in FY 11 to hire a full time sealant coordinator and initiate efforts to build sealant placement teams that target schools with large numbers of underserved children.

Oral Health Workforce Improvements –

- PPACA significantly expands the numbers of Americans with dental coverage through the pediatric dental benefit and Medicaid expansion, thereby further stressing the existing dental workforce. In order to assure expanded training of primary care dentists and dental hygienists, we urge you to include \$30 million in funding for FY 2011 as authorized by Section 5303 of PPACA, Section 748 of the Public Health Service Act.

- PPACA recognizes the importance of dental workforce diversification by authorizing a new program to train or employ “alternative dental health care providers in order to increase access to dental health care services, specifically targeted at underserved communities.” This 5 year program directs the Secretary to begin dispersing funds as early as March 2011. Given that these monies are only for states that explicitly allow either experimentation in their dental workforce or actually sanction a new provider, the Secretary will also need to work with states on planning and developing the capacity to embrace these opportunities. We believe a minimum investment of \$15 million in FY11 is necessary to fully realize the potential of this program in the out-years.

Surveillance and Infrastructure

- Oral Health Infrastructure – Under PPACA , CDC is authorized to expand its support of an oral health infrastructure program from 16 to all states as well as territories and Indian tribes. These CDC foundational programs create leadership, program guidance, oral health data collection and interpretation, and ultimately a multi-dimensional oral health delivery system. We urge your committee to invest \$25million for this program in FY’11.
- National Oral Health Surveillance – The health reform law rightly recognized the need to improve oral health reporting and ensure that federal survey tools include appropriate oral health questions. We ask that you include \$5 million to update and improve oral health reporting in the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the Medical Expenditures Panel Survey (MEPS) and the National Oral Health Surveillance System.

It has been a full decade since the Surgeon General called dental disease the silent epidemic and recognized it as a disease 5 times more common among children than asthma. We are at the brink of reversing a long recognized, significant health problem. Your leadership has never been more important to the future of America’s oral health and we are grateful to you for understanding and embracing this challenge. We stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Sincerely,

American Association for Dental Research
 American Association of Public Health Dentistry
 American Dental Education Association
 American Dental Hygienists' Association
 American Dental Partners
 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
 Arkansas State Dental Hygienists' Association
 Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
 Beckett Family Consultants
 Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
 Child Welfare League of America
 Children's Alliance
 Children’s Dental Health Project
 Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County
 Community Catalyst
 Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
 Dental Health Foundation
 Family Voices
 First Focus Campaign for Children

First Impressions S.C.
Happy Teeth => Happy Kids
Health Action New Mexico
Healthy Smiles Dental Center
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
International Association for Dental Research
Iowa Public Health Association
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Health Consumer Coalition
Maine Dental Access Coalition
Marillac Clinic
Maryland Dental Action Coalition
Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association
Michigan Oral Health Coalition
Mid-Iowa Health Foundation
Miles of Smiles
National Assembly of School-based Health Care
National Association of Dental Plans
National Dental Association
National Healthy Start Association
National Network for Oral Health Access
New England Alliance for Children's Health
New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition
New York Children's Action Network
New York State Oral Health Coalition
Oral Health Access Council
Oral Health America
Oral Health Kansas
Pew Children's Dental Campaign
REACH Health Care Foundation
REACH UP
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
The Children's Partnership
The Dental Health Foundation
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio
Virginia Health Care Foundation
Voices for America's Children
Voices for Ohio's Children
Washington Dental Service Foundation
Wichita-Sedgwick County Oral Health Coalition
Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition/Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin

Cc: The Honorable David Obey
The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services