



Call to Action on Oral Health: Messages for Health Care Reform

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The U.S. Congress is in the final stages of crafting legislation to reform our nation's health care system. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the *Affordable Health Care for America Act* and the U.S. Senate is poised for a vote on the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*. As the chambers work to meld the two bills, the timing is ideal for oral health advocates to send the message that key oral health provisions must be included in the health reform legislation that is sent to the President.

Contact your Senators and Representatives today to schedule a meeting to talk about the importance of oral health. Specifically, we recommend that you make the following key points:

- **Preserve pediatric oral health care.** Both the House and Senate bills guarantee oral health care for children covered under the Health Benefits Exchange. Given the importance of oral health to overall health, this is an essential element of the children's benefits package and must be included in any bill sent to the President.
- **Defer to the House bill on oral health expertise.** The House bill requires that the Health Benefits Advisory Committee charged with overseeing the Health Benefits Exchange must include experts in oral health. The Senate is silent on this issue. Because oral health and overall health have not been traditionally integrated, experts in oral health will be necessary to help ensure appropriate decisions are made with respect to coverage, benefit design, system delivery and quality.
- **Maintain oral health workforce provisions in the Senate bill.** The Senate bill includes significant provisions to expand training programs for dentists and fund demonstration grants for midlevel providers. Access to care is dependent on a sufficient investment in the oral health workforce and these Senate provisions must be maintained.
- **Maintain oral health prevention provisions in the Senate bill.** Senate provisions regarding oral health care prevention activities must prevail, including a public education campaign; demonstration grants for dental caries management; school-based dental sealant programs in all 50 states; allowing school-based health centers to use funds for dental programs; and authorizing CDC grants to improve oral health.

To contact your elected officials, call the U.S. Capitol switchboard: (202) 224-3121 or go to the web sites of the U.S. House of Representatives (www.house.gov) and U.S. Senate (www.senate.gov).