

May 18, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

As Congress takes action to advance legislation responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN), as represented by the almost 200 undersigned organizations, **strongly urges you to advance policies that support the important role of oral health in addressing this crisis. Specifically, we ask that you include policies in the next COVID-19 relief package that:**

- 1. Stabilize state budgets to protect access to essential oral health care by increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) by at least 12 percent and further increasing the FMAP for Medicaid dental services by five percent; and**
- 2. Provide immediate support to state health departments and oral health programs by establishing an oral health infrastructure fund to respond to crisis-related oral health needs.**

This current public health crisis is straining our nation's oral health care system, leaving millions of Americans without access to essential health care necessary to combat COVID-19. When basic oral health care is out of reach, many people have no choice but to turn to expensive emergency room settings for dental relief, further straining hospital capacity. In addition, poor oral health can have a direct, adverse impact on management of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, increasing chances of complications from COVID-19. Unfortunately, the populations who face the most significant barriers to oral health are also those most disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and its economic impacts.

Without additional support for the oral health care system and state infrastructure, our nation's oral health needs cannot be met as the pandemic and its economic consequences wear on. This will exacerbate long-standing disparities in oral health and overall well-being. As states face continued budget shortfalls, adult dental coverage in Medicaid will also be at significant risk. Millions of Americans could find themselves without coverage and unable to afford care. Simultaneously, dental providers, including those in private practice and safety net clinics like community health centers, are experiencing significant reductions in revenue that could put them out of business.¹ With a projected 66 percent decline in overall dental spending for 2020,² the oral health care system needs additional support to offer urgent, on-going care and address the backlog of oral health needs in the wake of COVID-19.

To address these issues:

We support the request of the National Governors Association³ to increase the FMAP funding for Medicaid in order to stabilize state budgets and protect access to essential oral health care. Increasing the FMAP by at least 12 percent will help stabilize state budgets and allow states to provide health coverage for the 72 million individuals currently covered by Medicaid. It will also allow state Medicaid programs to respond to increasing demand in the months ahead due to historic levels of unemployment.

¹American Dental Association, April 2020. "Third wave of HPI polling shows dentists' response to COVID-19: 79% of practices remain closed except for emergency patients.: Retrieved from: <https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2020-archive/april/third-wave-of-hpi-polling-shows-dentists-response-to-covid-19>.

²American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, April 2020. Modeling the Impact of COVID-19 on U.S. Dental Spending. Retrieved from: https://www.ada.org/-/media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIbrief_0420_1.pdf?la=en.

³National Governors Association, April 2020. "Governors' Letter Regarding COVID-19 Aid Request." Retrieved from: <https://www.nga.org/policy-communications/letters-nga/governors-letter-regarding-covid-19-aid-request/>.

We recommend an enhanced FMAP for Medicaid dental services in order to address the strategic role of dental services at this time. An increase of five percent for dental services will help to ensure that care remains available, which is particularly important to the health of those with underlying chronic conditions. It would also support oral health professionals to take a more active role in COVID-19 response.

We recommend the establishment of a \$75 million fund to be directed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services that supports state oral health programs in addressing their populations' immediate, crisis-related oral health needs. The allocation of federal funding directly to state oral health departments will allow states to respond flexibly to the individual needs of their constituents within state-determined scope and capacity. This may include sourcing and coordinating personal protective equipment, providing direct safety-net care to uninsured individuals, collecting relevant data, investing in telehealth technology, and/or expanding COVID-19 testing capabilities.

Our collective response to this pandemic will only be effective if it addresses all aspects of health and well-being. Investing in our nation's health and economic prosperity requires that health and dental care remain available and supported by a strong oral health infrastructure.

Sincerely,

The Oral Health Progress and Equity Network

National Organizations

- America's ToothFairy, Charlotte, NC
- American Association of Public Health Dentistry, Springfield, IL
- American Dental Hygienists' Association, Chicago, IL
- Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, Reno, NV
- Benevis Dental Practices Management Services, Marietta, GA
- Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc., Washington, D.C./Willimantic, CT
- Children's Health Fund, New York, NY
- Community Catalyst, Inc., Boston, MA
- Critical Learning Systems, Inc., Cane Ridge, TN
- DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement, Boston, MA
- Families USA, Washington, D.C.
- Jon C Burr Foundation, Alexandria, VA
- Justice in Aging, Washington, D.C.
- National Association of Community Health Centers, Alexandria, VA
- National Association of Dental Plans, Dallas, TX
- National Dental Association, Greenbelt, MD
- National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health, Englewood, CO
- National Network of Public Health Institutes, Washington, D.C.
- National Rural Health Association, Washington, D.C.
- Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice (OHNEP) Program, New York, NY
- Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN, Inc.), Washington, D.C.
- Project Accessible Oral Health, Albertson, NY
- PWF Consulting, Midlothian, VA
- Santa Fe Group, New York City, NY
- School-Based Health Alliance, Washington, D.C.

- The American Institute of Dental Public Health, San Antonio, TX
- The Gerontological Society of America, Washington, D.C.
- The Lawton Indian Hospital Dental Clinic, Lawton, OK

State, Local, Education & Tribal Organizations

Alabama

- Alabama Department of Public Health Office of Oral Health, Montgomery, AL

Alaska

- Alaska Primary Care Association, Anchorage, AK
- Lenaker Consulting, Juneau, AK

Arizona

- Arizona Oral Health Coalition, Phoenix, AZ
- Asian Pacific Community in Action, Phoenix, AZ
- Mountain Park Health Center, Phoenix, AZ
- Native American Connections, Phoenix, AZ
- Southern Arizona Oral Health Coalition, Tucson, AZ

Arkansas

- Arkansas Oral Health Coalition, Little Rock, AR

California

- California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Sacramento, CA
- Children Now, Oakland, CA
- County of San Diego HHSA, San Diego, CA
- Dientes Community Dental Care, Santa Cruz, CA
- Give for a Smile, Anaheim, CA
- Kimia Family Dentistry, Granada Hills, CA
- Maternal and Child Health Access, Los Angeles, CA
- Mendocino County HHSA, Public Health, Community Wellness, Ukiah, CA
- Mission City Community Network, North Hills, CA
- San Luis Obispo Health Agency, Oral Health Program, San Luis Obispo, CA
- The Children's Partnership, Los Angeles, CA

California, continued

- The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health, Los Angeles, CA
- Unicare Community Health Center, Inc, Ontario, CA
- University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry, San Francisco, CA

Colorado

- Community Dental Health NPO, Colorado Springs, CO
- Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation, Denver, CO
- Denver Health, Denver, CO
- The Truthful Tooth, Denver, CO

Connecticut

- The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc., Hartford, CT

Delaware

- Delaware Dental Hygienists' Association, Newark, DE
- Division of Public Health-Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, Dover, DE

Florida

- Catalyst Miami, Miami, FL
- Florida Institute for Health Innovation, West Palm Beach, FL
- Florida Voices for Health, Boynton Beach, FL

Hawaii

- Hawaii Children's Action Network, Honolulu, HI
- Hawaii Oral Health Coalition, Honolulu, HI
- Hawaii Public Health Institute, Honolulu, HI
- Oral Health for All Hawaii, Honolulu, HI

Idaho

- Idaho Oral Health Alliance, Boise, ID

Illinois

- Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, Champaign, IL

Iowa

- Delta Dental of Iowa, Johnston, IA
- Iowa CareGivers, West Des Moines, IA
- Iowa Dental Association, Des Moines, IA

Kansas

- Community Care Network of Kansas, Topeka, KS
- Oral Health Kansas, Topeka, KS
- Rawlins County Dental Clinic, Atwood, KS
- Salina Family Healthcare, Salina, KS

Kentucky

- Kentucky Oral Health Coalition, Louisville, KY
- Kentucky Youth Advocates, Louisville, KY
- McNary Group, Louisville, KY

Louisiana

- Louisiana Office of Public Health, Baton Rouge, LA
- Louisiana Oral Health Coalition, Baton Rouge, LA
- New Orleans Council on Aging, New Orleans, LA
- Well-Ahead Oral Health Promotion, Baton Rouge, LA

Maine

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Maine Chapter, Manchester, ME
- Brighter Maine Smiles, Brunswick, ME
- Community Dental Maine, Portland, ME

- Consumers for Affordable Health Care, Augusta, ME
- Kennebec Valley Dental Coalition d/b/a Waterville Community Dental Center, Oakland, ME
- Kennebec Valley Family Dentistry, Augusta, ME
- Maine Council on Aging, Brunswick, ME
- Maine Equal Justice, Augusta, ME
- Maine Oral Health Coalition, Augusta, ME
- Maine Public Health Association, Augusta, ME
- Partnership for Children's Oral Health, Yarmouth, ME
- The Bingham Program, Augusta, ME

Maryland

- Maryland Dental Action Coalition, Columbia, MD

Massachusetts

- Lunder-Dineen Health Education Alliance of Maine, Boston, MA

Michigan

- Detroit Community Solutions, Detroit, MI
- Health Net of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, MI
- Kent County Oral Health Coalition, Grand Rapids, MI
- Malcolm Madison Foundation, Detroit, MI
- Michigan Oral Health Coalition, Lansing, MI
- My Community Dental Centers, Petoskey, MI
- New Covenant of Peace, Detroit, MI
- Romancare Health Services, Detroit, MI
- Rosedale Park Baptist Church, Beverly Hills, MI
- Southeast Michigan Senior Regional Collaborative, Detroit, MI
- United Health Organization, Detroit, MI
- Urban Fit Kids (a/k/a JazzyKat Kids), Detroit, MI
- Virtual Dialysis Support Center, Detroit, MI

Minnesota

- Apple Tree Dental, Mounds View, MN
- Children's Dental Services, Minneapolis, MN
- Community Dental Care, Maplewood, MN
- Douglas County Early Childhood Initiative, Alexandria, MN
- Let's Smile, Inc., Owatonna, MN
- Minnesota Dental Therapy Association, Minneapolis, MN
- Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Plymouth, MN
- Normandale Community College, Bloomington, MN
- Uptown Dental, Albert Lea, MN
- West Central Unity, Fergus Falls, MN

Mississippi

- Mississippi Oral Health Community Alliance, Jackson, MS

Missouri

- Missouri Coalition for Oral Health, Jefferson City, MO
- Randolph County Caring Community Partnership, Moberly, MO

Montana

- Montana Primary Care Association, Helena, MT

Nevada

- Future Smiles, Las Vegas, NV

New Hampshire

- Bi-State Primary Care Association, Bow, NH
- ExpressMed, Manchester, NH
- New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition, Concord, NH

New Jersey

- Advocates for Children of New Jersey, Newark, NJ
- NJ Oral Health Coalition, North Brunswick, NJ

New Mexico

- New Mexico Oral Health Coalition (NMOHC), Albuquerque, NM
- Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM
- Health Action New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

New York

- Finger Lakes Community Health, Penn Yan, NY
- Grand Street Settlement, New York, NY
- Health Migration Consulting Inc., East Setauket, NY
- Long Island FQHC, Inc., Westbury, NY
- New York State Oral Health Coalition, Albany, NY
- NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, New York, NY
- Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Albany, NY

North Carolina

- NC Child, Raleigh, NC

Ohio

- Oral Health Ohio, Cincinnati, OH

Oklahoma

- Southern Plains Tribal Health Board, Oklahoma City, OK

Oregon

- Blair-Morgan Consulting, Portland, OR
- Klamath Basin Oral Health Coalition, Klamath Falls, OR

Pennsylvania

- Disability Healthcare Initiative at ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
- One Health Resource Co., Pittsburgh, PA
- PA Coalition for Oral Health, Delmont, PA
- Pennsylvania Head Start Association, Harrisburg, PA

Rhode Island

- The Rhode Island JAYCEE Alliance, W. Warwick, RI
- The Rhode Island Oral Health Commission, Warwick, RI

South Dakota

- South Dakota Oral Health Coalition, Pierre, SD

Texas

- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Austin, TX
- Methodist Healthcare Ministries, San Antonio, TX
- Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy/Texas Impact, Austin, TX
- Texas Oral Health Coalition, Midland, TX

Utah

- Voices for Utah Children, Salt Lake City, UT

Vermont

- Dental Health, Brattleboro, VT
- Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center, Springfield, VT

Virginia

- Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Onancock, VA
- Fauquier Free Clinic, Warrenton, VA
- Healthy Living and Learning Center @ Petersburg Public Library, Petersburg, VA
- Johnson Health Center, Bedford, VA
- Johnson Health Center, Lynchburg, VA
- Johnson Health Center, Madison Heights, VA
- Northern Virginia Health Foundation, Alexandria, VA
- Piedmont Regional Dental Clinic, Orange, VA
- Rockbridge Area Health Center, Lexington, VA
- Tri-Area Community Health, Laurel Fork, VA
- Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations, Virginia Beach/Arlington, VA
- Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, Richmond, VA
- Virginia Community Healthcare Association, Henrico, VA
- Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association, Virginia Beach, VA
- Virginia Diabetes Council, Richmond, VA
- Virginia Health Care Foundation, Richmond, VA
- Virginia Health Catalyst, Richmond, VA
- Virginia Organizing, Charlottesville, VA
- Virginia Poverty Law Center, Richmond, VA

Washington

- Arcora Foundation, Seattle, WA
- CHOICE Regional Health Network, Olympia, WA
- Statewide Poverty Action Network, Seattle, WA
- Tothsavers of Washington, Spokane, WA

West Virginia

- West Virginia Oral Health Coalition, Charleston, WV

Wisconsin

- Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition, Milwaukee, WI
- Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

Wyoming

- Wyoming Primary Care Association, Cheyenne, WY

