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of Dental Plans

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer,

The National Association of Dental Plans (NADP) and its members appreciate that Congress is considering further steps to mitigate the economic and health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to **include a significant increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) beyond the current expansion of 6.2% under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, as well as specific FMAP funds for preserving dental benefits, in any future relief package.**

Providing an increased FMAP will allow states to preserve vital oral health and dental services through traditional Medicaid and managed care plans, reducing emergency department visits related to dental issues and aiding in the management of chronic diseases.

Governors have begun to outline deep cuts to their budgets: in Colorado, Governor Polis has outlined \$228 million in spending reductions,¹ Ohio Gov. DeWine has proposed \$775 million in cuts,² and Gov. Newsom in California has proposed a significant reduction in Medicaid adult dental benefits, removing access to preventive and non-emergency dental care for 7.6 million Americans.^{3,4}

¹ Colorado Office of State Planning & Budgeting. "Executive Order D 2020 050," April 30, 2020.

<https://www.colorado.gov/governor/sites/default/files/inline-files/D%202020%20050%20Budget.pdf>.

² Tobias, Andrew J. "Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine Announces \$775m in State Budget Cuts to Education, Medicaid and More." Cleveland.com, May 7, 2020. <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2020/05/ohio-gov-mike-dewine-announces-775m-in-state-budget-cuts-to-education-medicaid-and-more.html>.

³ Department of Finance. "May Revision Budget Proposal to Legislature." Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. May 14, 2020.

<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>.

⁴ "Medi-Cal Enrollment by Eligibility Group." CHHS Open Data. California Health and Human Services Agency, February 2020.

https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/medi-cal-enrollment-by-eligibility-group/resource/d33eee4a-4c17-48da-8099-3fd2bac29ac2?inner_span=True.

National Association of Dental Plans

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When states are forced to make cuts to Medicaid, adult dental benefits are often targeted. Oral health is integral to overall health, and without dental treatment individuals with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease may be at increased risk of hospitalization for oral health issues.

In a time of tremendous strain on our hospital systems, a spike in dental related emergency department (ED) visits would divert resources needed to treat COVID-19 patients. Studies show eliminating adult dental coverage from a Medicaid program leads to a sharp increase in dental-related ED visits and a 68% increase in the cost of dental ED visits.⁵

In 36 states and the District of Columbia, Medicaid programs and Medicaid dental managed care plans provide individuals with affordable coverage for both preventive and extensive dental treatment. States, plans, and providers have developed systems that confer dramatic improvements to oral health and quality of life for vulnerable populations.

In the Families First Coronavirus Response Act enacted on March 18, an overwhelming bipartisan coalition acknowledged the necessity for an FMAP increase, raising the rates by 6.2%. Those funds acted as a stopgap for providers, Medicaid managed care plans and Medicaid programs as the COVID-19 pandemic began. However, the unprecedented nature of the current pandemic and economic downturn necessitate further action to preserve the progress made towards improving oral health. **Further support of state Medicaid programs through an increase in the FMAP is critical. In addition, because of the integral nature of Medicaid adult dental benefits, states should be incentivized to preserve dental coverage with a targeted FMAP increase for dental.**

Thank you for your consideration of NADP's views. We applaud the steps Congress has taken to combat the pandemic and look forward to providing insight and information as additional measures to provide relief are considered.

Sincerely,



Eme Augustini
Executive Director

NADP Description:

NADP is the largest non-profit trade association focused exclusively on the dental benefits industry. NADP's members provide dental HMO, dental PPO, dental Indemnity and discount dental products to more than 200 million Americans with dental benefits. Our members include the entire spectrum of dental carriers: companies that provide both medical and dental coverage, companies that provide only dental coverage, major national carriers, regional, and single state companies, as well as companies organized as non-profit plans.

⁵ Singhal et al. "Eliminating Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage In California Led To Increased Dental Emergency Visits And Associated Costs." Health Affairs. Project HOPE—The People-to-People Health Foundation, Inc., May 1, 2015. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2014.1358>.

