

Dear Chairman Harkin/Obey:

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 Senate Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee 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 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 Catalyst  
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 America  
Oral Health Kansas  
Pew Center on the States  
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  
Washington Dental Service Foundation  
Wichita-Sedgwick County Oral Health Coalition  
Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition