

[We/I] am writing to ask you to support appropriations for dental care measures in the newly enacted Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148). The law authorizes funding for new and expanded programs to prevent dental disease and augment the dental workforce so that those most in need of care receive it. None of us can eat, speak, smile, breathe, or learn successfully without good oral health.

Health care reform legislation was based on the belief that comprehensive insurance coverage and sound prevention will reduce the burden of disease and the costs of preventable illness. FY 2011 appropriations, including an allocation from the Prevention and Public Health Fund, are necessary to fund these oral health programs contained in the law:

- 5-year national, public education campaign focused on oral health, including prevention and education – (Title IV, Sec. 4102)
- Requirement that all states, territories and Indian tribes receive grants for school-based dental sealant programs – (Title IV, Sec. 4102)
- Demonstration grants to show the effectiveness of research-based dental caries disease management activities -- (Title IV, Sec. 4102)
- Expanded oral health surveillance collections -- (Title IV, Sec. 4102)
- Expanded cooperative agreements to improve oral health infrastructure – (Title IV, Sec. 4102)
- Demonstration grants and evaluation of alternative dental health care providers -- (Title V, Sec. 5304)
- Expanded dental training programs -- (Title V, Sec. 5303)
- Expanded primary care residency programs, including dental programs, and new and expanded graduate medical education, including dental education – (Title V, Sec. 5508)

The consequences of poor dental health are far worse—and longer lasting—than many policy makers and the public realize.

- Early growth and development - Having healthy baby teeth is vital to proper nutrition and speech development and sets the stage for a lifetime of dental health.
- School readiness and performance - In a single year, more than 51 million hours of school may be missed because of dental-related illness.
- Overall health - A growing body of research indicates that periodontal disease - gum disease - is linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and stroke.
- Economic consequences - An estimated 164 million work hours each year are lost because of dental disease. Dental problems also hinder a person's ability to get a job in the first place

States can help eliminate the pain, missed school hours and long-term health and economic consequences of untreated dental disease –**if** they have the option of using new federal funds for targeted investments in effective policy approaches. A handful of states are leading the way, but all states, in partnership with the federal government, can and must do more to ensure access to dental care. Thank you for your consideration.