

October 15, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
Acting Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We, the undersigned organizations, thank you for your leadership in your efforts to reform our nation's health care system through *Affordable Health Choices Act* and *America's Healthy Future Act of 2009*. We especially urge you to include key provisions to improve the oral health of all Americans in any bill that goes to the Senate floor.

As you know, oral health is essential to overall health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, dental decay is the single most common chronic disease in children—and it is preventable. We have for far too long ignored this public health crisis. For every child who lacks medical coverage, two are without dental coverage. Further, a third of all adults have no dental coverage. According to a 2003 study published in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, an average of 738,000 people visit an emergency department for tooth pain or injury each year. For these reasons, we ask that you prioritize the following provisions when merging the two bills:

- Pediatric Dental Benefit – Benefits under the exchange must include the pediatric dental benefit that is currently included in both the Senate Finance Committee Chairman's Mark and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee bill [Title XXXI, Sec. 3103(h)(1)(A)(ix)].
- Workforce Improvements – Title VII provisions in the Senate HELP Committee bill to expand and improve the oral health workforce must be maintained [Title V, Subtitle D, Sec. 433 and 434].
- Dental Disease Prevention and Public Health – Significant oral health related provisions in the Senate HELP Bill must be preserved, 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 [Title III, Subtitle B, Sec. 312, 313 and 314].

Further, we request that you consider adding a key provision to require that an oral health expert must sit on any health benefits advisory committee. Absent input from an oral health expert, we can expect that oral health needs will be overlooked. This has consistently been the case as a result of the historic separation of oral health delivery and financing from the traditional medical system. Language making this change was included in the Energy and Commerce Committee's Chairman's Mark and we would appreciate if the Senate would similarly take it up.

We thank you again for your leadership on this issue and stand ready to assist you in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

American Association for Dental Research
American Dental Education Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Dental Partners
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Dental Health Project
Children's Health Fund
Dental Health Foundation
DentaQuest Foundation
Family Voices
First Focus
Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association
Medicaid Health Plans of America
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Dental Association
Oral Health America
Pew Children's Dental Campaign
RESULTS
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Voices for America's Children
Washington Dental Service Foundation