

March 19, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Speaker:

The dental professional associations listed below, as members of the Organized Dentistry Coalition, are writing to express our disappointment with both the Senate-passed health care reform bill and the related House reconciliation bill. While this legislation contains many worthwhile oral health provisions, including recognition of pediatric oral health care services as an essential benefit, we cannot support this legislation in its current form. The main reason is that it does not properly fund Medicaid dental services and therefore will not improve access to oral health care for those most in need.

Data show that there is a direct relationship between the level of reimbursement and dentist participation in Medicaid and the utilization of services by beneficiaries. Unless the federal government makes an investment in preventing dental disease--which will reduce future Medicaid expenses--oral health will remain neglected and many Americans will continue to suffer needlessly. The legislation also fails to include measures that would remove administrative barriers or establish data-gathering initiatives to help policymakers take additional steps to improve oral health care delivery in Medicaid. By extending Medicaid eligibility to individuals in families with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level without addressing the funding issue, and without providing a basic adult dental benefit for existing or new Medicaid enrollees, Congress is essentially promising an insurance card without real access to oral health care.

Our associations are also concerned that Congress seems intent on offering low-income families a lower tier of care, provided by non-dentists without appropriate training. Hence, we oppose provisions in the bill to allow workforce pilot programs that may lead to non-dentists performing surgical dental procedures. We oppose provisions that would divert primary care dentist residency training funds to dental hygiene training.

Overall, our associations do not believe that enactment of this legislation will help millions of low-income Americans to obtain the oral health care they need.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American College of Prosthodontists
American Dental Association