

December 17, 2009

The Honorable Roland Burris
387 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Burris Amendment # 3237

Dear Senator Burris:

The undersigned organizations want to thank you for your leadership and indicate our strong support for your amendment (S.A. 3237) that has been offered to pending health reform legislation (H.R. 3590).

This budget neutral amendment allows dentists to refer Medicare patients directly for physical therapy services and mirrors existing legislation, H.R. 1430, the Medicare Oral Health Rehabilitative Enhancement Act.

Dentists treat patients for conditions that require physical therapy such as jaw fractures, temporomandibular joint dysfunction and disorders, as well as reconstructive procedures subsequent to pathological or congenital anomalies.

Current Medicare statute prohibits dentists from the direct referral of patients for physical therapy, and instead, requires a dentist to initially refer patients to an allopathic or osteopathic physician and/or work with such a physician to establish a therapy plan when a dentist believes physical therapy should be part of a patient's treatment. Such consultation is an unnecessary financial burden to the patient and the Medicare system, and it ultimately delays patient treatment and disrupts the continuum of care.

This provision will save significant time and Medicare resources by allowing dentists to directly refer for outpatient physical therapy and to establish and monitor therapy plans of care for their patients. It would also increase access to necessary physical therapy services to those patients served by the Medicare program.

We hope that Burris Amendment #3237 is included in the final health reform package to be considered by the Senate and appreciate your efforts on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American College of Prosthodontists
American Physical Therapy Association
National Dental Association

cc: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid