May 31, 2013

Honorable Matt Cartwright  
1419 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

Honorable Janice Hahn  
404 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Representative Cartwright and Representative Hahn:

Our organizations applaud you for introducing H.R. 2130, the Access to Substance Abuse Treatment Act of 2013. This bill would provide grants for states and localities to treat and prevent addiction to methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and other illicit drugs.

Substance use disorders are primary, chronic, and often progressive diseases that affect every aspect of health, including oral health. For example, methamphetamine users can experience a phenomenon known as “meth mouth,” a distinct and often severe pattern of oral decay that is associated with the meth use.1 Restoring a meth user’s teeth can be costly. In fact, extraction of most or all remaining teeth is sometimes the only viable treatment option.

Additionally, narcotic analgesics, such as hydrocodone and oxycodone, have become a leading source of drug abuse among teens and young adults. As prescribers of these painkilling medications, dentists have a key role to play in preventing their diversion, misuse and abuse.2

If enacted, H.R. 2130 would recognize dental care as a covered wrap-around service for the comprehensive treatment of those with substance use disorders. It would also support education and training for oral health professionals to learn more about substance use disorders and their relationship to oral health and dental care. Above all, it recognizes the dramatic shift in the way people view oral health (as a part of overall health and well-being).

We applaud you for raising this highly important issue and are pleased to offer our enthusiastic support. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Jennifer Fisher at the American Dental Association. Jennifer can be reached at 202-789-5160 or fisherj@ada.org.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association
Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Dental Consultants
American Association of Endodontists
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Dental Hygienists’ Association
American Student Dental Association
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Hispanic Dental Association
