

April 21, 2023

The Honorable John Joyce
152 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Joyce:

On behalf of our 159,000 dentist members, the American Dental Association (ADA) would like to thank you for introducing H.R. 2559, the Strengthening Community Care Act of 2023. Investment in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and community health centers will help to bring more dentists and other health professionals to people and areas facing critical health workforce and care shortages.

As you know, this bill addresses health workforce shortages by extending enhanced funding through 2028 for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), which provides scholarship and loan repayment programs for health care workers who serve in federally designated shortage areas. By reauthorizing the enhanced funding for the NHSC through 2028, the bill prevents this needed funding from expiring at the end of the 2023 fiscal year.

The ADA is committed to the mission of the NHSC and strongly supports enhanced funding for NHSC scholarship and loan repayment opportunities for dentists. This enhanced funding would, in part, allow NHSC to expand programs that address problems with health workforce distribution and local shortages, while also providing an opportunity for dentists and other health care professionals to reduce student loan debt through service. The burden of paying off student loans for graduate dental education often contributes to geographical gaps in availability of dental services and limits access to oral health care because indebted graduates must seek out less risky and more lucrative opportunities. Your bill would encourage dentists and promising dental students to practice in underserved areas by providing loan repayment and scholarships in exchange for a service commitment.

This bill would also extend funding for the Community Health Center (CHC) Fund through 2028 and avoid sunseting the CHC fund in 2023. The ADA is dedicated to optimal oral health for all Americans, and thus better systemic health for all. Because of this commitment, ADA strongly supports community-based care like CHCs, which also provide needed care to underserved areas and populations.

Thank you, again, for standing with the nation's dentists and their patients through extending enhanced funding for the NHSC and extending the CHC Fund. The ADA appreciates your leadership on dental workforce and access to care issues in H.R. 2559 and looks forward to continuing to work with you. If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Fisher at fisherj@ada.org or at 202-789-5160.

Sincerely,

George R. Shepley, D.D.S.
President

Raymond A. Cohlmia, D.D.S.
Executive Director

GRS:RAC:jf