

June 8, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the over 159,000 dentist members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we are writing to urge you to bring H.R. 3561, the Promoting Access to Treatments and Increasing Extremely Needed Transparency Act (PATIENT Act), to the floor for a vote. The ADA strongly supports this bill's reauthorization of important workforce programs focused on those most in need of care.

The PATIENT Act would extend the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program, which is currently set to expire on September 30, 2023. It would also raise THCGME funding by \$50 million every two years through fiscal year 2029, providing needed resources for new and expanded dental residency programs. THCGME programs train residents to serve some of our nation's most vulnerable populations in community-based settings such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Rural Health Clinics, and tribal health centers. Extending and expanding this funding would provide increased stability to teaching health centers and strengthen continuity of care in underserved communities.

This extension of THCGME would also direct critical funding to a program that has needed increased resources for years, allowing for the expansion of existing THCGME programs and the creation of many new THCGME programs and residency slots. New funding would address general health workforce shortages and would also address persistent health disparities. Because 60 percent of THCGME training sites are in Medically Underserved Communities (MUCs) and research suggests that dentists and physicians are more likely to practice near the location of their training, extending and expanding THCGME funding would likely increase access to care in MUCs and lead to better health outcomes among populations experiencing oral health disparities.

H.R. 3561 would also extend the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) through 2025. The ADA strongly supports increasing NHSC scholarship and loan repayment opportunities for dentists. Extending NHSC programs would continue to address problems with health workforce distribution and local shortages, while also providing an opportunity for dentists and others 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

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dental services and access to oral health care because indebted graduates must seek out less risky and more lucrative opportunities. Extending the NHSC would encourage dentists and promising dental students to practice in underserved areas by providing loan repayment and scholarships in exchange for a service commitment.

Additionally, this bill would extend funding for community health centers (CHC) through 2025 and avoid sunsetting CHCs in 2023. The ADA strongly believes in the importance of optimal oral health, and thus better systemic health, for all Americans. Because of this commitment, the ADA supports community-based care like CHCs, which also provide needed care to underserved areas and populations.

America's dentists thank you for your leadership on dental and health workforce issues, which would be further demonstrated by bringing the PATIENT Act to the floor for a vote and passage. The ADA is ready to work with you to ensure that the dental workforce is sufficient to provide access to care for all Americans across our nation.

If you have any questions, please contact Natalie Hales at 202-898-2404 or [Halesn@ada.org](mailto:Halesn@ada.org).

Sincerely,

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

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

GRS:RAC:nh