

September 18, 2023

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Ways & Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education & The
Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, Chairman Smith, and Chairwoman Foxx:

On behalf of the over 159,000 dentist members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we are writing to commend your work on the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act. The ADA strongly supports efforts to extend the Community Health Center Fund, the National Health Service Corps, and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program. These programs are crucial steps towards shoring up our nation's dental and medical workforce so that more Americans can have access to high quality health care.

The ADA believes strongly 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 Community Health Centers, which serve a critical role in providing quality preventive and primary oral health care in underserved communities and populations.

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 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 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.

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In addition, the ADA applauds your efforts to expand the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program. This renewed and strengthened support would help provide 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.

America's dentists thank you for your leadership on health care workforce issues. 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.

Sincerely,

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

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

GRS:RAC:nh