

Coordination of Pro Bono Medically Recommended Dental Care Act

S. 466/H.R. 963

The American Dental Association (ADA) urges you to cosponsor the “Coordination of Pro Bono Medically Recommended Dental Care Act”, S. 466/H.R. 963, sponsored by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Representatives Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Steve Stivers (R-OH).

These bills would create a grant program that supports national dental programs which coordinate medically recommended dental care for low income individuals. The dental services will be provided by volunteer dentists at no cost to patients who have medical conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, autoimmune disease, kidney disease, or who need heart or joint replacements or transplants.

The legislation is needed because Medicare, which does not cover routine dental services, will not pay for the coordination of medically recommended dental care. Coordination will significantly facilitate the delivery of needed oral health care services to address dental disease that adversely impacts medical conditions. For example:

- Untreated periodontal disease in diabetics makes it difficult to control blood glucose. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to kidney failure and cardiovascular disease.
- It is critical for end stage renal disease patients to have a proper diet and nutrition regimen. Poor dental health can compromise their ability to have a good medical outcome.
- Research has linked dental infections to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Untreated dental disease can trigger increased disease in rheumatoid arthritis patients.

We believe the legislation will ultimately result in a cost savings because it will reduce Medicare and Medicaid costs. For example, kidney dialysis patients need to consume enough protein to stabilize their condition. If patients cannot eat properly, physicians have to insert a feeding tube. A 2001 study reported that the estimated one year cost of feeding a patient through a tube is \$31,832. Under the legislation, a patient in this condition would receive free oral health services from a volunteer dentist and avoid the need of a feeding tube.

It has been estimated that the \$2 million grant investment in the bills will return roughly \$13 million in medically-necessary, pro bono dental treatment and will help 5,000 Medicare and/or Medicaid beneficiaries.

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Information:

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The Organizations listed below signed on to letters supporting S. 466/H.R. 963, the “Coordination of Pro Bono Medically Recommended Dental Care Act.”

AARP	American Kidney Fund
Academy of General Dentistry	Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Alliance of the American Dental Association	American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology	American Student Dental Association
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry	Colgate-Palmolive Company
American Academy of Periodontology	Dental Lifeline Network
American Association for Dental Research	Dental Trade Alliance
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	Hispanic Dental Association
American Association of Public Health Dentistry	National Forum of ESRD Networks
American Association of Women Dentists	National Kidney Foundation
American College of Prosthodontists	National Multiple Sclerosis Society
American Dental Education Association	Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention
American Dental Association	