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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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
Academy of General Dentistry
Alliance of the American Dental Association
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Public Health Dentistry
American Association of Women Dentists
American College of Prosthodontists
American Dental Education Association
American Dental Association

American Kidney Fund
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists
American Student Dental Association
Colgate-Palmolive Company
Dental Lifeline Network
Dental Trade Alliance
Hispanic Dental Association
National Forum of ESRD Networks
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention