

September 8, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McCarthy and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the dentists in our states, we are writing to let you know that we are committed to addressing the oral health needs of all Americans – with comprehensive Medicare dental coverage for older Americans up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. As Congress is discussing expanding Medicare to include dental benefits, we want to help you provide the best oral health care to those seniors, while ensuring a robust provider network is in place.

The current Medicare program includes distinct “parts” that recognize the variability in delivery of health care services such as hospital care, physician services and prescription drugs. The dental care system is significantly different from the medical care delivery system. Based upon current legislative proposals, an expansion of benefits within the current Part B structure of Medicare would not adequately meet the needs of our dentists and Medicare patients.

Dentists are unlikely to join a network based on the current Medicare Part B structure for a number of reasons, including low reimbursement rates that fail to address overhead costs associated with delivering dental care. Given that dental offices are vastly different than physician offices, applying the physician fee schedule system to fee schedules for dental care will not ensure sustainability of the dental delivery system. This is a system that has high costs of maintaining and running an office, including dental equipment, supplies, lab costs, staffing needs, anesthesia and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Additionally, dentists will be further dissuaded from participating in Part B by the required compliance with regulations designed for the medical delivery system. These include requirements relating to Electronic Health Records, quality ratings, auditing/compliance, documentation, and more.

The overall administrative burden of participating in Part B of Medicare will likely impact access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. A benefit will not help seniors if there are no dentists who take it.

We strongly urge Congress not to support a Medicare Part B dental benefit, and look forward to continuing this important conversation with you and your staff as Congress considers how best to provide oral health care to our Nation’s seniors. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Chris Tampio with the American Dental Association at tampioc@ada.org.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association

Alabama Dental Association
Alaska Dental Society
Arizona Dental Association
Arkansas State Dental Association
Colorado Dental Association
Connecticut State Dental Association
Delaware State Dental Society
Florida Dental Association
Georgia Dental Association
Hawaii Dental Association
Idaho State Dental Association
Illinois State Dental Society
Indiana Dental Association
Iowa Dental Association
Kansas Dental Association
Kentucky Dental Association
Louisiana Dental Association
Maine Dental Association
Maryland State Dental Association
Massachusetts Dental Society
Michigan Dental Association
Minnesota Dental Association
Mississippi Dental Association
Missouri Dental Association
Montana Dental Association
Nebraska Dental Association
Nevada Dental Association
New Hampshire Dental Society
New Jersey Dental Association
New Mexico Dental Association
New York State Dental Association
North Carolina Dental Society
North Dakota Dental Association
Ohio Dental Association
Oklahoma Dental Association
Oregon Dental Association
Pennsylvania Dental Association
Rhode Island Dental Association
South Carolina Dental Association
South Dakota Dental Association
Tennessee Dental Association
Texas Dental Association
Utah Dental Association
Vermont State Dental Society
Virginia Dental Association
Washington State Dental Association
West Virginia Dental Association
Wisconsin Dental Association
Wyoming Dental Association

cc: U.S. House Committees on Energy & Commerce; Ways and Means, Budget
U.S. Senate Committees on Health Education Labor & Pensions; Finance; Budget