

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Nanette Diaz Barragán
U.S. House of Representatives
2246 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Barragán:

On behalf of the 162,000 members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we are writing to thank you for introducing the Improving the Social Determinants of Health Act (H.R. 379).

Social determinants such as access to healthy food, good job opportunities, reliable transportation, safe housing, and educational opportunity can have a large impact on health, including oral health. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the disparities faced by minority and underserved populations. To help address those disparities, H.R. 379 would create a new social determinants of health (SDOH) program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The ADA's Action for Dental Health (ADH) national campaign provides care to people who suffer from untreated dental disease, strengthens and expands the public and private safety net, and brings disease prevention and education into communities. ADH includes initiatives aimed at addressing the social determinants of oral health through eliminating or drastically reducing barriers to quality dental care. Community Health Workers (Community Dental Health Coordinators, or CDHCs) are instrumental in educating families about oral health and guiding patients to community-based care, while helping them navigate the complexities of access posed by socio-economic, language, cultural, and other factors.

Thank you for your support of the Action for Dental Health Act, which was signed into law in 2018. The ADH law allows the CDC and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to award grants or enter into contracts to develop and implement these critical oral health initiatives.

The SDOH program created by H.R. 379 would help enhance ADH by enabling the CDC to give grants to local and state dental organizations, as well as dental schools, so that they can lead efforts on the social determinants of oral health.

The ADA is proud to support the Improving the Social Determinants of Health Act and looks forward to continuing to work with you to improve oral health. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Jennifer Fisher at fisherj@ada.org.

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Sincerely,

Daniel J. Klemmedson, D.D.S., M.D.
President

Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director

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