

March 4, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the over 159,000 dentist members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we are writing to thank you for bringing H.R. 3843, the Action for Dental Health Act of 2023 to the floor for a vote. The ADA strongly supports this bipartisan legislation which would reauthorize the Action for Dental Health (ADH) program for a five-year period, from 2024 to 2028. ADH directs crucial federal funding to state and local organizations through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) oral health workforce grant program.

A recent ADA survey of dentists demonstrated the acuteness of oral health workforce issues, as one-third of dentists are actively recruiting dental hygienists and dental assistants, and 87% of dentists told the ADA that recruiting for these positions is extremely challenging. These challenges came despite new incentives offered to prospective dental team members. Dental practice staffing difficulties limit the number of patients dentists can see, thus posing an obstacle to access to dental care. These closely linked problems of workforce deficiencies and difficulty accessing dental care are magnified in the underserved areas that are the focus of ADH programs.

The ADA has long championed the ADH program, which provides federal grants for the dental health needs of underserved populations. ADH funding is directed towards dental disease prevention through improved oral health education, reduction of geographic and language barriers, and improved access to care, among other initiatives. Programs supported by ADH advance the important goal of decreasing dental health disparities in communities where better access to care is most needed.

We look forward to the advancement of H.R. 3843 to reauthorize the Action for Dental Health Act (P.L. 115-302) oral health workforce grants for innovative programs from fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2028.

Once again, we thank you for your attention to health care workforce issues and to ADH. The nation's dental professionals stand ready to work with you to ensure Americans have a sufficient dental workforce to meet their oral health needs. If you have any questions, please contact Natalie Hales at 202-898-2404 or Halesn@ada.org.

Sincerely,

Linda J. Edgar, D.D.S., M.Ed.
President

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

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