

January 18, 2018

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members,

As you take up the Continuing Resolution this week, the American Dental Association (ADA) and its 161,000 members are writing to express support for the inclusion of two provisions important to dentistry: the six-year reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and a two-year moratorium on the 2.3 percent excise tax imposed on the sale of medical devices. Both measures play a vital role in maintaining affordable and accessible health care.

CHIP provides much needed oral health services to nearly 9 million children and pregnant women enrolled in the program. Dental care has the highest level of cost barriers compared to other health care services, with more individuals forgoing needed dental care over prescription drugs, medical care, eyeglasses or mental health services.¹ Poor oral health has serious long-term effects on an individual's life. Tooth decay remains the most common, chronic disease among children and adolescents, impacting school performance and attendance. Early intervention can prevent long-term problems, which extend into adulthood and can impact an individual's employability, military readiness and overall health status.

CHIP offers affordable coverage that is specifically designed to meet the needs of children, including pediatric oral health services. More importantly, CHIP helps working families afford health coverage by capping premiums and cost-sharing to 5 percent of a family's income. As health coverage costs continue to rise, CHIP provides a safety net for families in every state. Nearly 90 percent of children in CHIP live in families with incomes less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$40,480 for a family of three.² Ensuring access to comprehensive coverage and providing continuity of coverage for our nation's low-income children should be a priority.

We also strongly support the repeal of the medical device excise tax. The dental manufacturing industry estimates that the medical device excise tax will increase the cost of dental care by over \$160 million annually resulting in harm to our patients and an increase in the overall cost of health care. Good oral health is an essential part of an individual's overall health and well-being. An increase in the cost of oral health care as a result of the excise tax on medical devices — including restorative materials, instruments, impression materials and equipment — could make health care less affordable and act as a deterrent to patients seeking dental care.

¹ American Dental Association Health Policy Institute. Cost Barriers to Dental Care in the U.S. Accessed December 6, 2017.

² CHIP Funding Delay Threatens Children's Health Care, Families USA. Accessed December 6, 2017.
<http://familiesusa.org/initiatives/childrens-health-insurance-program>

As you know, health care professionals who operate solo or small group practices are economic engines for their communities. In 2010, the most recent year for which we have survey data, 96.2 percent of the dentists surveyed reported that they work in practices comprising five or fewer dentists. The nature of dental insurance plans means that a dentist's reimbursements may not keep pace with this tax and many offices will have to absorb most of the increased cost. Operating costs for dental practices, particularly specialties, are significant, and the ability to sustain or grow small businesses like dental practices will be further constrained under this new excise tax.

While we offer our strong support for these measures, we remain concerned about the future of Community Health Centers and the National Health Service Corps. Both programs are in need of full reauthorization as they are critical to increasing access to quality health care in rural and underserved communities. We look forward to working with Congress on improving access to oral health care for all Americans, including our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Crowley, D.D.S.
President

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

cc: Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman
House Committee Ways and Means

Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means