

March 14, 2007

Dear Senator:

Our organizations are writing to urge you to co-sponsor the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007, S. 739. The recent, tragic death of 12-year old Deamonte Driver, of Maryland, from a severe brain infection that may have resulted from a deplorable degree of untreated dental disease, underscores the urgency for passage of S. 739.

This bill brings together needed elements to improve oral disease and access to underserved populations. It recognizes the role of private practicing dentists, community-based and academic care centers, increased support from Medicaid and SCHIP and broader prevention programs. Specifically it:

- Provides financial incentives to states to improve the delivery of dental services under the Medicaid and SCHIP programs;
- Requires states to provide payment rates sufficient to enlist providers to treat enrolled children;
- Allows states to provide wrap-around coverage for dental services for SCHIP-eligible children enrolled in other coverage options;
- Provides grants through HRSA to expand the availability of primary dental care services in health professional shortage areas or medically underserved areas;
- Provides incentive payments to private practicing dentists willing to practice in a federally-designated dental health professional shortage area or whose patients are comprised of at least 25 percent Medicaid, SCHIP or uninsured;
- Requires the Secretary of HHS to establish an oral health initiative to reduce disparities in oral health for low-income children and improve health in vulnerable populations; and
- Requires the Secretary to encourage public-private partnerships to focus on prevention and education of oral disease.

As organizations representing all aspects of the dental community, we support S. 739 and believe that it will help to address the oral health needs of our neediest children. We hope that you will agree to cosponsor the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
Alabama Dental Association
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

American Academy of Periodontology
American Association of Dental Consultants
American Association of Dental Editors
American Association of Dental Examiners
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American College of Dentists
American College of Prosthodontists
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
Association of Public Health Dentistry
California Dental Association
Colorado Dental Association
Connecticut State Dental Association
Dental Trade Alliance
District of Columbia Dental Society
Florida Dental Association
Georgia Dental Association
Hawaii Dental Association
Hispanic 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
Missouri Dental Association
Montana Dental Association
Nebraska Dental Association
Nevada Dental Association
New Hampshire Dental Society
New Mexico 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
Tennessee Dental Association
USA Section, International College of Dentists

Utah Dental Association
Vermont State Dental Society
Virginia Dental Association
West Virginia Dental Association
Wisconsin Dental Association