

June 26, 2017

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the organizations listed below that represent dentists, allied dental professionals, dental educators and dental and craniofacial researchers, we write to respectfully request that as the Senate considers changes to the *Affordable Care Act (ACA)*, the pediatric oral health provision is retained.

Often overlooked is the fact that good oral care is inextricably linked to good overall systemic well-being. And unfortunately dental caries, although largely preventable, remains the most common chronic disease of children aged 6 to 11 years of age. In fact, tooth decay is four times more common than asthma among adolescents aged 14 to 17 years of age, and is the number one disease of childhood.

There is an undeniable unmet need of pediatric oral health care in America. Approximately 23 percent of children ages 2 to 11 have unmet dental care needs and the situation is even worse among children from lower income families.¹ In some cases of untreated tooth decay, the results can be fatal. The tragic case of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince Georges County, Maryland, who succumbed to an untreated abscessed tooth, is just one example.

Given that tooth decay is the number one disease of childhood, we are asking that pediatric oral health care be made a priority in any legislation to replace the ACA. As health professionals, we are acutely aware that there are competing health interests to consider in the process, but the necessity for pediatric dental care is so profound, we do not believe it can or should be discounted. Instead, we believe it should remain a priority in any health care reform legislation.

We stand ready and willing to be a resource on this issue or any other that affects oral health and the delivery of care.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Academy of Periodontology

American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Orthodontists
American Association of Women Dentists
American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists
National Dental Association
Oral Health America

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Charles Schumer

¹ The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 1999-2004.