

May 14, 2025

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst
U.S. Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Neal Dunn, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
466 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
1110 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Baldwin, Senator Ernst, Representative Dunn, and Representative Schrier:

On behalf of the undersigned dental organizations, we are writing to thank you for reintroducing (S 1677/HR 3277) the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA). This important legislation would close health benefit plan loopholes to ensure all group and individual health plans cover provider-directed medically necessary services as a result of a congenital anomaly impacting the function of the teeth, mouth, jaw, eyes or ears.

According to the CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, approximately 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States each year has a congenital anomaly, commonly referred to as a birth defect. Examples of craniofacial anomalies – deformities in the growth of the bones and soft tissue in the head and face – include cleft lip and palate, skeletal and maxillofacial deformities, facial paralysis, microtia, hypodontia (absence of teeth) and craniosynostosis. These conditions impede daily functioning, restricting a patient's ability to breathe, eat and speak. Corrective procedures allow these patients to grow and function normally.

Severe dental anomalies are a frequent feature of many craniofacial conditions and while many private health insurance companies cover preliminary procedures for congenital anomalies, they routinely deny or delay follow-up or corrective procedures – notably, dental-related procedures involving orthodontia and dental implants – deeming them cosmetic or covered by dental plans.

Dental insurance coverage is far less comprehensive than medical insurance coverage. As a result, patients and their families are frequently burdened with substantial out-of-pocket expenses for medically necessary reconstructive dental care throughout their lives.

Thank you again for your support and leadership on this important issue. Our organizations are committed to working with you to pass the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act in the 119th Congress.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

American Academy of Periodontology
American Association of Endodontists
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American Dental Association
American Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists
American Student Dental Association
Hispanic Dental Association
Society of American Indian Dentists