



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

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September 25, 2007

delivered via e-mail

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is writing to endorse H.R. 976, the conference legislation to reauthorize the state Children's Health Insurance Program. The AAPD is the membership organization representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Our over 7,000 members are the "front line" providers of oral health care to America's children and educators of health professionals about children's oral health.¹

The AAPD applauds your leadership on this legislation, specifically the dental provisions contained in Section 501. As you know, the recent tragedy of the twelve-year old Maryland boy whose family did not have Medicaid access, and who died after bacteria from an abscessed tooth spread to his brain, generated attention to the often-overlooked issue of access to dental care for all children. H.R. 976 includes a dental benefit in CHIP, defined as "coverage of dental services necessary to prevent disease and promote oral health, restore oral structures to health and function, and treat emergency conditions." States may elect to meet this requirement through any of three "benchmark plans": (1) federal employee plan (2) state employee dependent dental coverage; or (3) commercial coverage ("a dental benefits plan that has the largest insured commercial, non-Medicaid enrollment of dependent covered lives of such plans that is offered in the State involved.") **This represents a tremendous victory for America's children!**

Another critically important dental provision in H.R. 976 is that insurers/plans that provide perinatal care services to the CHIP population must: "deliver oral health education materials that inform parents about risk for, and prevention of, early childhood caries and the need for a dental visit within their newborn's first year of

¹ *The AAPD represents not only the nation's pediatric dentists, but also general dentists who treat significant numbers of children in their practices. The AAPD is the recognized authority on pediatric oral health care, and is a leader in several prominent areas, including: the development of pediatric dentistry oral health policies and clinical practice guidelines; the dissemination of information to parents and caregivers about pediatric oral health care; and partnership with the federal government on several key pediatric oral health initiatives targeted at new mothers, pre-school children, and adolescents.*

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life." **This will help promote the "dental home" and age one visit for CHIP children, thereby avoiding the need for costly dental restorative services later in their young lives.**

H.R. 976 also includes important provisions to clarify that FQHCs may contract with private dentists for services, and to collect and analyze enhanced quality measures including data on dental services actually provided to CHIP children.

[The AAPD looks forward to working with you to promote passage into law of H.R. 976.](#)

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Keith R. Morley in black ink.

Keith R. Morley CD, B.Sc, DMD, FRCD[C]
President

Handwritten signature of John S. Rutkauskas in black ink.

John S. Rutkauskas, DDS, MBA, CAE
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Heber Simmons Jr., AAPD Congressional Liaison
C. Michael Gilliland, Hogan and Hartson
C. Scott Litch, AAPD Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel