



April 2, 2007

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

On behalf of more than 21,000 members the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and the American Association for Dental Research (AADR) representing academic dentistry and dental research, endorse your bill the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007. Furthermore, we applaud your efforts to improve access and delivery of oral health care for all children. The goal of improving access and delivery of oral health care to children across the country incorporated in your bill is a goal we universally endorse. You recognize that pediatric oral health is a bona fide public health issue which requires that disparities in access to care be ameliorated.

We are very appreciative of the fact that you solicited our comments and listened to our views, especially with respect to the Medicare Graduate Medical Education provisions in the bill. The GME provisions alone would go a long way towards maintaining and expanding needed dental residency positions, which would have a tremendously positive impact on the goals of your legislation.

The Children's Dental Health Improvement Act seeks to eliminate the disparities in access to oral health care by allowing states the flexibility to better utilize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to provide dental coverage to low-income children. We are most pleased with the provision making dental a required benefit in SCHIP and a reporting requirement on use of dental services by children.

The lack of oral health insurance and other barriers to obtaining oral health services has markedly diminished the use of both preventive services and treatments for oral diseases. Currently, availability of dental coverage in Medicaid and SCHIP does not bridge the income gap to equalize the likelihood of visiting a dentist.

The need to improve the oral health of America's children is well documented. According to the National Health and Nutrition Interview Survey dental care is the most frequently cited unmet health need of children. The Health Survey reveals that the unmet need is three times greater than unmet need for medical care, four times greater than unmet need for prescription drugs, and five times greater than unmet need for vision care. The Survey showed that dental caries [dental decay] is the most prevalent

chronic disease of childhood. The Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007 should help address this "hidden epidemic".

ADEA/AADR is firmly committed to eliminating oral health disparities across the United States. We strongly support the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007 and we look forward to working with you in ensuring its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Q. Swift". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James Q. Swift, D.D.S  
President, ADEA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc W. Heft". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marc W. Heft, D.M.D., P.h.D.  
President, AADR