



Association of Dental Support Organizations and Members Convene in Washington to Advocate for Legislative and Regulatory Priorities during Annual Fly-In

Addressing Oral Health Workforce Challenges, Improved Medicaid Oversight, School Debt for Dental Students, Eliminating COVID-19 Mandates on the ADSO Agenda

WASHINGTON, DC (June 21, 2023) – Today, the Association of Dental Support Organizations (ADSO) and its member companies convened in Washington for a series of meetings with members of Congress during their second annual fly-in. Participants spread out across the halls of Congress to advocate for a policy agenda to help foster improvements in dental care across the United States.

Addressing oral health workforce challenges was a top priority, as the ADSO and its members called on Congress to act to help ensure there are enough dental professionals in the United States to not only meet the current demand for oral health care services, but to expand access. Shortages of dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants are resulting in delayed routine oral health care across the country. To help alleviate this shortage, the ADSO earlier this year [launched](#) a task force to explore the issues impacting recruitment and retainment, and to provide recommendations to help dental practices reach their desired staffing levels.

“Dozens of our members blanketed Capitol Hill this week to educate Congress on the challenges our industry faces when it comes to ensuring there are enough dental professionals to provide the oral health care Americans need,” stated Andrew Smith, ADSO’s Executive Director. “Oral health care is essential health care, and the ADSO and our members are doing our part to help alleviate these workforce shortages through advocacy in Congress and in statehouses across the country.”

In addition to meetings with members of Congress and their staffs, the group heard directly from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Chief Dental Officer Dr. Natalia Chalmers, U.S. Reps. Robin Kelly (D-IL), Bob Latta (R-OH), and others.

Over the course of the day, ADSO members touched on critical issues facing the dental industry and dental care broadly. Topics included:

- **Oral health training and educational opportunities:** The ADSO calls on Congress to increase funding for federal oral health clinical training programs; reauthorize legislation (H.R. 3843) providing workforce grants for dentists and oral health initiatives conducted by state, local and tribal entities; and approve the Doctors of Community Act (H.R. 2569) to permanently reauthorize and increase funding for the Teaching Health Center

Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program to support the training of medical and dental residents.

- **Federal support for state-based workforce solutions:** ADSO supports interstate compacts to allow dentists and dental hygienists that have invested in their training to be able to have an expedited pathway if they want to be licensed to practice in multiple states. However, some of these efforts are running into stumbling blocks that Congress can help address. The States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment (SHARE) Act (H.R. 1310) would expedite the current licensing process for health care providers and increase the number of licensed health care providers that can work across state lines.
- **Improved Medicaid oversight:** Variations in state Medicaid programs have led to decreased provider participation in the program. Participants are seeking increased federal oversight with respect to monitoring access, network adequacy standards, established minimum utilization rates, and adequate reimbursement that covers the cost of care, the appeals process, and prior authorization.
- **Improved access to oral health care in Medicaid:** The Strengthening Medicaid Incentives for Licensees Enrolled in Dental (SMILED) Act (H.R. 1422), would reduce administrative burdens for dentists participating in Medicaid by simplifying credentialing, encouraging states to use an integrated data collection system, and requiring that Medicaid audits be performed by a dentist of the same specialty and be based on clinical practice guidelines.
- **Visa reform:** The current visa lottery system is needlessly disadvantageous to foreign-trained dentists and international students interested in studying dentistry and serving American patients. The ADSO urges Congress to weigh in with the Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security to encourage both departments to improve their processes to alleviate unnecessary burdens and slowdowns.
- **Eliminating strict COVID care mandates:** Throughout the pandemic, dentists provided care for patients while containing the spread of COVID-19 through the use of appropriate infectious disease control. Now that the public health emergency has ended, ADSO calls on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to withdraw permanent mandates related to patient screening, ventilation, protective equipment, distancing and barriers that are no longer needed and detract from patient access and care.
- **Improved veterans' access to oral health care:** ADSO supports the Veterans Early Treatment to Chronic Ailment Resurgence through Examinations (VET CARE) Act (H.R. 2410), which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to hold a four-year pilot program providing dental care for veterans with certain chronic health conditions.

Currently, veterans are ineligible for VA dental benefits unless they are 100 percent disabled, have a service-related mouth injury, or were a prisoner of war.

- **Improved oral health literacy:** ADSO supports passage of the Oral Health Literacy and Awareness Act (H.R. 994/S. 403), which would authorize a public education campaign to increase oral health literacy and awareness, particularly as it relates to children, pregnant women, parents, older adults, people with disabilities, and racial and ethnic minorities.
- **Student loan forgiveness:** New dentists face alarming levels of student debt at graduation. The Resident Education Deferred Interest (REDI) Act (S. 704/H.R. 1202) would increase accessibility to education and training programs by allowing dental and medical students to defer interest accrual on their federal loans while they are in their residency programs.

###

The [Association of Dental Support Organizations](#) (ADSO) is a non-profit organization committed to providing support to its members, allowing affiliated dentists to focus on patients, expand access to quality dental care and improve the oral health of their communities.