November 19, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the undersigned dental organizations, we write to express our strong support for the Action for Dental Health Act (S. 5099 / H.R. 2001) and urge the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions to advance this bipartisan legislation before the conclusion of the 119th Congress. Passed by the House on July 20, 2026, H.R. 2001 would reauthorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) State Oral Health Workforce Grant Program at $15 million annually for fiscal years 2026 through 2030, sustaining critical efforts to strengthen the dental workforce and expand access to oral health care in underserved communities. We are encouraged by the bill's passage in the House and look forward to working with you to move the continuation of this important program forward.

Workforce challenges are among our top priorities. According to the American Dental Association's (ADA) Health Policy Institute (HPI), in the first quarter of 2026, 37.6 percent of dentists reported recruiting a dental hygienist during the prior three months, and 36.7 percent reported recruiting a dental assistant. Among those dentists, more than 90 percent said hygienist recruitment was very or extremely challenging, and about 70 percent said the same of assistant recruitment. Persistent staffing shortages constrain practice capacity and access to care, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

As you know, the oral health community has long championed Action for Dental Health (ADH), which provides federal grants to address the oral health needs of underserved populations. ADH funding supports disease prevention and oral health education, reduces geographic and language barriers, and expands access through initiatives such as mobile dental services and the establishment of dental homes. Programs supported by ADH advance the critical goal of reducing oral health disparities in communities where access to care is most needed.

We appreciate your leadership in addressing dental workforce challenges and supporting Action for Dental Health. Ensuring a strong dental workforce is essential to meeting the oral health needs of all Americans. We look forward to collaborating with you to advance this important bipartisan legislation. Should you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Fisher at Fisherj@ada.org.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association (ADA)
Academy of General Dentistry (AGD)
American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology (AAOMP)
American Academy of Orofacial Pain (AAOP)
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)
American Academy of Periodontology (AAP)
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR)
American Association of Endodontists (AAE)
American Association of Orthodontists (AAO)
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS)
American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD)
American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association (ACPA)
American Dental Education Association (ADEA)
American Student Dental Association (ASDA)
National Dental Association (NDA)
National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA)
Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID)