

July 22, 2026

The Honorable Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senate
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nanette Barragan
United States House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Alsobrooks and Representative Barragan,

On behalf of the undersigned dental organizations, we write to thank you for introducing the Medicaid Dental Benefit Act. This important legislation would make dental and oral health services a mandatory component of Medicaid coverage for adults in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The need for this legislation has become even more urgent following enactment of H.R. 1, which places new pressure on state Medicaid programs and increases the risk that optional benefits, including adult dental coverage, could be reduced or eliminated as states confront budgetary constraints. As you know, adult dental benefits remain optional under federal Medicaid law, leaving millions of low-income adults subject to a patchwork of coverage that varies widely by state and is often limited, emergency-only, or unavailable.

This lack of dental coverage is particularly problematic because the millions of adults who rely on Medicaid are less likely to access dental care (including basic preventive services), face significant cost barriers to dental care, and are more likely than their higher income counterparts to experience dental pain, report poor oral health, and find their lives to be less satisfying due to their poor oral health.

Eliminating adult dental benefits could affect 36.2 million adults who currently have access to limited or enhanced dental coverage and is estimated to increase U.S. health care costs by approximately \$1.9 billion in one year and \$9.6 billion over five years, driven by increased emergency department visits for dental conditions and unmet periodontal care needs among pregnant beneficiaries and individuals with diabetes and coronary artery disease.¹

Loss of adult dental coverage also undermines preventive care, worsens oral and overall health, increases avoidable medical spending, and can harm economic opportunity, with estimates that more than 2 million adults could face challenges finding work because of their oral health if adult Medicaid dental benefits were removed.

Ensuring comprehensive adult dental coverage in Medicaid is therefore both sound health policy and a prudent economic investment. As such, we commend your leadership in

¹ Deesha Bhaumik, Ian Hedges, Matthew Zaborowski, and Marko Vujicic, What Happens if the Adult Medicaid Dental Benefit Goes Away?, American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, March 2025, available at https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-files/resources/research/hpi/what_happens_if_adult_Medicaid_dental_goes_away.pdf.

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advancing this important legislation and urge other members of Congress to cosponsor the Medicaid Dental Benefit Act of 2026. We look forward to working with you to protect access to dental care for adults who rely on Medicaid and to advance policies that improve oral health. For further discussion, please contact Natalie Hales, Senior Congressional Lobbyist, at halessn@ada.org.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association

Academy of General Dentistry

American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology

American Academy of Orofacial Pain

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

American Academy of Periodontology

American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research

American Association of Public Health Dentistry

American Dental Education Association

American Student Dental Association

ASTDD Foundation, Inc.

National Dental Association

National Network for Oral Health Access

Society of American Indian Dentists