

# CONGRESS HAS A SOCIAL AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH FOR EVERYONE



Oral health is key to overall health and wellbeing; to promote and protect it, we should enact policies that ensure everyone can access meaningful oral health coverage and care. If we address the barriers to oral health that millions of people face, like cost of care or lack of oral health coverage, we will avoid unnecessary health care costs that result when oral health problems go untreated. The following **socially and fiscally responsible actions** are meaningful steps Congress can take toward that goal:

**Action 1: Congress should add oral health coverage under Medicare Part B covered services.**

- Oral health is the number one health service that people in the U.S. do not get because they cannot afford it, even more so than prescription drugs.
- Without oral health coverage, millions of older adults and people with disabilities are unable to get the care they need to stay healthy, eat well, and prevent infections and costly complications.

**Consider co-sponsoring/introducing a companion to:**

- S.22/H.R. 2951 Medicare Dental Benefit Act of 2019 (Sen. Cardin/Rep. Barragan)
- S.1423 Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act (Sen. Casey)
- H.R.1393 - Medicare Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2019 (Rep. Doggett)
- H.R.4650 - Medicare Dental Act of 2019 (Rep. Kelly)

**Action 2: Congress should make oral health care a mandatory component of pregnancy-related benefits in Medicaid.**

- As Congress focuses on improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality, securing oral health coverage is an essential part of the solution.

- Despite widespread agreement that oral health care during pregnancy is critical to the health of both mother and child, pregnant women, especially those covered by Medicaid or CHIP, often do not have options to obtain affordable oral health care.

**Consider co-sponsoring/introducing a companion to:**

- S.1343/H.R. 2602 MOMMIES Act (Sen. Booker/Rep. Pressley)
- S.916/H.R.1897 MOMMA's Act (Sen. Durbin/Rep. Kelly)

**Action 3: Congress should appropriate an additional \$17.5 million to the CDC Division of Oral Health to support an oral health program in every state.**

- State oral health programs ensure each state can prevent oral disease and support oral health promotion through prevention, reducing disparities, supporting the oral health workforce, and provide dental services including school-based oral health programs for children.
- The CDC Division of Oral health estimates that an additional \$17.5M, for a total of \$36.5 million, would fund oral health programs in all 50 states. The House Labor-HHS bill only includes an additional \$1M. The Senate has not yet passed a Labor-HHS appropriation.

**Consider supporting:**

- An appropriation of not less than \$36.5 million annually to fully fund the state-based oral health programs of the CDC Division of Oral Health for FY2020 and going forward