

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2021

Contact: Kristin LaRoche
857-275-5038
klarochec@carequest.org

Lisa Holland
202-695-5160
Lholland@familiesusa.org

National Survey Finds Broad, Bipartisan Support for Medicare Dental Coverage

A new survey shows eight in 10 voters favor adding dental coverage to Medicare. Support is even higher in 2022 Senate battleground states.

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Americans across the political spectrum are ready for Medicare dental coverage. A new YouGov survey found an overwhelming majority of likely midterm voters – including 82% of voters in 2022 Senate battleground states – favor adding dental benefits to Medicare.

More than three-quarters of American voters surveyed in July support adding dental coverage to Medicare as proposed in the \$3.5 trillion budget plan introduced in the Senate. Nine out of 10 respondents believe dental care is a necessary part of overall health care and 55% hold their members of Congress responsible for the current lack of coverage.

“These results make it clear to Congress – their constituents overwhelmingly support adding dental coverage to Medicare,” said Frederick Isasi, Executive Director of Families USA. “Our health should not depend on our wealth, yet the health of one out of every two people who rely on Medicare suffers because they can’t afford to get the oral health care they need. The time for Medicare to provide oral health care benefits is long overdue. It’s time for Congress to act.”

Ifetayo Johnson, Executive Director of the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) agrees, “Millions of older adults and people with disabilities in this country pay into Medicare their whole working lives and yet it completely leaves out the mouth. It’s no surprise eight out of ten voters want to see this problem fixed, especially when it has such critical implications for advancing health equity.”

The survey also revealed the human and social cost of inaction: 52% of respondents aged 65 or older reported avoiding necessary dental visits due to cost. Emergency dental visits for preventable oral health conditions cost the U.S. health system an estimated \$2 billion per year.

“The pandemic has made clear that our most vulnerable neighbors – older Americans, people living with disabilities, low-income adults, and communities of color – need life-saving support,” said Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, President and CEO of CareQuest Institute for Oral Health (CareQuest Institute). “We can no longer exclude oral health as vital to creating equitable health outcomes across America.”

The YouGov poll was conducted on July 6-13, 2021 among a representative sample of 1,000 likely 2022 midterm voters nationwide. The margin of error is +/- 3.47%. The poll was commissioned by CareQuest Institute, Families USA, and OPEN, a group of organizations

dedicated to strengthening access to the oral health coverage needed to keep Americans healthy.

About Medicare Dental Coverage

Medicare does not currently include coverage for dental health services as a standard benefit. Of the 60 million older adults and individuals with disabilities who receive Medicare benefits, 67% of them – 37 million – do not have dental coverage. Low-income adults and people of color are overrepresented in this group. Poor oral health is linked with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and pneumonia, the risk of which increases among older adults.

###

About CareQuest Institute for Oral Health

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health is a national nonprofit championing a more equitable future where every person can reach their full potential through excellent health. We do this through our work in grantmaking, research, health improvement programs, policy and advocacy, and education as well as our leadership in dental benefits, care delivery, and innovation advancements. We collaborate with thought leaders, health care providers, patients, and local, state, and federal stakeholders to accelerate oral health care transformation and create a system designed for everyone. To learn more, visit [carequest.org](https://www.carequest.org).

About Families USA

Families USA, a leading national voice for health care consumers, is dedicated to the achievement of high-quality, affordable health care and improved health for all.

About Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)

Over the last decade, OPEN has emerged from a nationwide conversation among policymakers, providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers who acknowledge that the system of health care we have in place today is not working for people's overall health and well-being, and that it's time to work together to build a new reality. OPEN has taken a network building approach to changing the oral health system by engaging health equity advocates, community-based organizations, providers, clinicians, policymakers, and health justice organizers to build alignment and coordinate efforts toward realizing a shared vision, as well as achieving articulated goals and targets.