



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

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delivered via e-mail

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is writing to applaud your leadership in introducing H.R. 1781, the [Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007](#).

The recent tragedy of the twelve-year old Maryland boy whose family did not have Medicaid access and who died after bacteria from an abscessed tooth spread to his brain has generated attention to the often-overlooked issue of access dental care for all children. As you know, oral health is central to overall health. Indeed, when dental problems go untreated innocent victims suffer the unfortunate consequences. This exemplifies the importance of every child having a dental home by age one and the proper infrastructure in place to prevent and treat dental decay. Research shows that early intervention prevents dental disease and reduces costs, avoiding more costly restorative care or even hospitalization in many cases of early childhood caries. **An age one visit is so important because there is a strong emphasis on prevention, with parents given counseling in infant oral hygiene, home and office based fluoride therapies, dietary counseling, and oral health habits and dental injury.**

The AAPD is the membership organization representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. Our 6,800 members are the "front line" providers of oral health care to America's children and educators of health professionals about children's oral health. *The AAPD represents not only the nation's pediatric dentists, but also general dentists who treat significant numbers of children in their practices.* The AAPD is the recognized authority on pediatric oral health care, and is a leader in several prominent areas, including: the development of pediatric dentistry oral health policies and clinical practice guidelines; the dissemination of information to parents and caregivers about pediatric oral health care; and partnership with the federal government on several key pediatric oral health initiatives targeted at new mothers, pre-school children, and adolescents.

[H.R. 1781](#) brings together needed elements to improve oral disease and access to underserved populations. It recognizes the role of private practicing dentists and

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increased support from Medicaid and SCHIP and broader prevention programs. The AAPD especially applauds the critical provisions to:

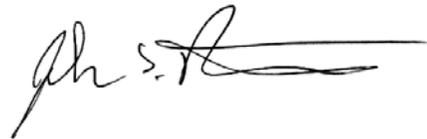
- Provide financial incentives to states to improve the delivery of dental services under the Medicaid and SCHIP programs;
- Require dental coverage and uniform dental data reporting in SCHIP.
- Allow states to provide wrap-around coverage for dental services for SCHIP-eligible children lacking dental coverage who are enrolled in medical plans.

The AAPD looks forward to working with you to promote passage of the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007 in order to address the oral health needs of our nation's neediest children. We are also available and willing to provide written or in-person testimony to support this legislation.

Sincerely yours,



Philip H. Hunke, DDS, MSD
President



John S. Rutkauskas, DDS, MBA, CAE
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Heber Simmons Jr., AAPD Congressional Liaison
C. Michael Gilliland, Hogan and Hartson
C. Scott Litch, AAPD Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel