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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Dingell Makes Children's Dental Health a Priority
Introduces the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007

Washington, D.C. — Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce introduced the Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007. The bill is designed to improve the delivery of dental services provided to low-income children under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

"Today, four to five million children in America suffer from dental disease that limits their ability to eat, sleep, play and learn," said Dingell. "More than 850,000 school days are missed each year by children who are affected by dental pain. We must work to aggressively address dental disease the same way we have worked to wipe out other common childhood diseases."

The Children's Dental Health Improvement Act of 2007 expands dental coverage to more low-income children, ensures access to qualified dentists, and improves the reporting and tracking of dental disease among children. It also ensures that dental care coverage is part of all benefit packages provided under SCHIP.

The legislation also establishes a number of grant programs to improve the delivery of pediatric dental services, raise oral health awareness and highlight the importance of prevention. Low-income children who have a preventive dental visit by age one are less likely to require subsequent restorative or emergency room visits and their average dental related costs are nearly 40 percent lower over five years.

"Dental disease is the most common childhood disease - more prevalent than asthma, diabetes and hay fever. It is also the easiest to prevent," explained Dingell. "The recent deaths of two young children - in Maryland and Mississippi - have refocused our attention to the importance of early access to dental care. These tragedies have also made it clear that stronger federal oversight is needed."

In addition, the legislation creates a Chief Dental Officer post to lead a dental health initiative within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Medicaid and SCHIP.

[Read the full summary of the bill and bill text »](#)

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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