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July 21, 2021

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
U.S. House of Representatives
2438 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
U.S. House of Representatives
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Cárdenas and Bilirakis,

On behalf of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) and its 40,000 members, I write to express support for your bipartisan legislation, the *Oral Health Literacy and Awareness Act of 2021* (H.R.4555). We appreciate that this bill would authorize the HRSA to develop and test evidence-based oral health literacy strategies capable of reaching across vulnerable populations to provide oral disease prevention education through a 5-year oral health literacy campaign.

As general dentists, we believe oral health literacy is the foundation of a lifetime of wellness. Most oral health ailments can be avoided by increasing oral health literacy among all populations, with an emphasis on children to ensure they develop and maintain healthy habits into adulthood. Additionally, oral health literacy must be a cornerstone of improving the utilization of care by underserved populations.

HRSA has demonstrated a commitment to improving oral health among the most vulnerable populations. We believe their efforts to achieve this goal will be bolstered by integrating effective oral health literacy strategies.

This legislation is the appropriate response to the troubling findings from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on the status of our nation's oral health. We failed to hit the Healthy People 2020 target of getting 49% of Americans to use the oral health care system. Only 43.3% of children, adolescents, and adults visited the dentist in 2016, which is less than the baseline set in 2007 (44.5%). We cannot have another decade of backsliding.

Additionally, we continue to see appalling disparities by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education when it comes to both receiving dental care and suffering from untreated tooth decay. Ensuring all Americans understand the importance of taking care of their oral health is a vital component of our nation's overall health.

The AGD stands ready to work with you and your staff to generate support for this critical legislation and on future shared interests. Please do not hesitate to contact Daniel J. Buksa, JD, Associate Executive Director, Public Affairs, by phone at (312) 440-4328 or via email at Daniel.buksa@agd.org to let us know how we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Bruce Cassis, D.D.S., MAGD
President
Academy of General Dentistry

Myron (Mike) Bromberg, D.D.S.
Congressional Liaison
Academy of General Dentistry