

Strengthening Medicaid Incentives for Licensees Enrolled in Dental (SMILED) Act (H.R. 1422)

Please urge your Representative to cosponsor H.R. 1422, the *SMILED Act*. Please urge your Senator to consider introducing a companion bill.

H.R. 1422 would reduce administrative burdens for dentists in Medicaid, including by streamlining credentialing. By reducing such administrative burdens, the bill will encourage and help more dentists enroll and stay enrolled in the Medicaid program, expanding access for Medicaid beneficiaries.

The legislation was introduced by Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID-2) and referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce in March 2023.

Background

Although dental coverage for children has increased significantly over the past few decades, coverage does not necessarily translate to access to or utilization of care. Additionally, dental health care coverage lags far behind for adult patients. For example, studies find that only 32 percent of those with public dental coverage reported use of dental services in a given year.[1]

According to another study, nearly half of all Americans even with insurance skip dental visits because of cost. Not using the oral health care system as recommended (e.g., routine visits), can result in the development of serious preventable diseases such as tooth decay, periodontal disease, and oral cancer.[2] Untreated dental disease can lead to chronic pain, disfigurement, and death and contributes to the progression of other diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and Alzheimer's disease.

Further compounding this challenge is that dentists, and specifically general dentists, are not adequately reimbursed for providing services to Medicaid patients. While reimbursement levels vary by state, they largely remain significantly lower than private payer reimbursements. Additionally, dentists face many administrative burdens, such as prior authorization, when participating in Medicaid programs. As a result, less than half of all dentists in the U.S. participate in Medicaid.

H.R. 1422, SMILED Act

H.R. 1422 would encourage and support dentists participating in Medicaid. The legislation would:

- Require states to take action to reduce administrative barriers to provider participation in Medicaid.
- Require states to implement a streamlined integrated data collection system to more efficiently enroll, screen, and credential dentists under a Medicaid program.
- Establish a reformed audit methodology for evaluating dental and oral health service claims and for assessing improper payments for such claims.

H.R. 1422 would provide dentists with a streamlined and less burdensome process to participate in Medicaid so they are able to care for their Medicaid patients and advance our shared goals of providing comprehensive oral health care and preventative general dental care to all.

Who is the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD)?

Founded in 1952, the AGD has over 40,000 members from across the United States and is the only professional association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. As the country's second-largest dental association, AGD works to promote oral health to the public and foster general dentists' continued proficiency through quality continuing education.

References

[1] Chad D. Meyerhoefer, Irina Panovska, and Richard J. Manski. Projections Of Dental Care Use Through 2026: Preventive Care to Increase While Treatment Will Decline. Health Affairs. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0833> (accessed March 20, 2023).

[2] Michelle Lambright Black. Nearly Half of Insured Americans Skip Dental Visits, Procedures Due to Cost. Value Penguin. <https://www.valuepenguin.com/dental-survey> (accessed March 20, 2023).