



July 13, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Castor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Julia Letlow
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Academy of General Dentistry Support for the PREVENT HPV Cancers Act of 2023 (H.R. 3633)

Dear Congresswoman Castor, Congresswoman Letlow, and Congresswoman Schrier:

On behalf of the Academy of General Dentistry's (AGD) 40,000 members and the AGD Foundation, we are happy to lend our endorsement and support for H.R. 3633, the *Promoting Resources to Expand Vaccination, Education and New Treatments for (PREVENT) HPV Cancers Act of 2023*.

As the only dental association solely dedicated to the interests of general dentists, the largest segment of the dental profession, and as the second largest professional dental organization, the AGD recognizes the important role it can play in advancing oral health care for every individual. Founded in 1952, the AGD's mission is to "advance general dentistry and oral health through quality continuing education and advocacy." One of the primary focuses of the AGD and the AGD Foundation is to improve oral cancer awareness, risk factor prevention, and diagnostic training for general dentists.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is believed to cause nearly 70 percent of oropharyngeal (throat and mouth) cancers in the U.S. each year.¹ In fact, nearly 15,000 patients had diagnoses of oropharyngeal cancer in 2021 alone.² Cancer is always best treated at its earliest stage – screening for cancer regularly benefits patients' prognosis and decreases the cost of treating advanced-stage cancers. General dentists are often the first line of defense against oral cancer. At biannual visits, dentists may catch irregularities and unusual growths in the mouth and throat during routine screenings. If an irregularity is suspicious, dentists can refer patients to the appropriate specialty care.

However, studies report that public awareness of oral cancer is poor. Many patients present for treatment with late-stage disease, which increases patients' risk of complications and mortality.³ Patients may forgo care at earlier stages because early-stage oral cancers are often asymptomatic or present like other more benign conditions.⁴ Therefore, prevention, routine screening, and education on oropharyngeal cancers is critical to saving lives. Providing patients with routine dental health care will protect their health and prevent them, and the health care system, from incurring unnecessary costs.

We strongly believe that, if enacted, the *PREVENT HPV Cancers Act* will make positive strides toward improving oral cancer awareness and prevention through its direct emphasis on promoting awareness of HPV vaccines and HPV-related cancers. Specifically, this bill would direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a national campaign to raise awareness among and educate health

¹ Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, "HPV and Oropharyngeal Cancer," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, October 3, 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/basic_info/hpv_oropharyngeal.htm (accessed June 16, 2023).

² National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Cancers Caused by HPV," February 28, 2022, *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/parents/cancer.html> (accessed June 16, 2023).

³ S. Warnakulasuriya and A.R. Kerr, "Oral Cancer Screening: Past, Present, and Future," *Journal of Dental Research* 100, no. 12 (November 2021): pp. 1313-1320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220345211014795> (accessed June 16, 2023).

⁴ *Ibid.*

care providers and the public about HPV, its association with certain cancers, and the importance of HPV vaccines. The bill will also target outreach efforts to at-risk populations. The AGD appreciates such targeted outreach, as people who are located in rural areas, have lower incomes, and are Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black, are less likely to have had a dental visit within the last year.⁵ Additionally, oral cancer rates are higher among populations that are socially and economically disadvantaged, older adults, and in men, further highlighting the need for more targeted action and outreach.⁶

The AGD applauds the *PREVENT HPV Cancers Act* for taking steps to improve cancer prevention and awareness. The AGD and the AGD Foundation are committed to working with Congress, the public, and other stakeholders in the fight against oral cancer.

We appreciate your commitment to improving the lives of all patients. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Daniel J. Buksa, JD, Associate Executive Director of Public Affairs at (312) 440-4328 or at daniel.buksa@agd.org.

Sincerely,



Hans P. Guter, DDS, FAGD
President
Academy of General Dentistry



Myron (Mike) Bromberg, DDS
Congressional Liaison
Academy of General Dentistry

CC: Colleen Lawler, CAE IOM
Executive Director
Academy of General Dentistry

⁵ Cha AE, Cohen RA. Urban-rural differences in dental care use among adults aged 18–64. NCHS Data Brief, no 412. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:106856>[external icon](#) (accessed June 16, 2023).

⁶ S. Warnakulasuriya and A.R. Kerr, “Oral Cancer Screening: Past, Present, and Future,” *Journal of dental research* 100, no. 12 (November 2021): pp. 1313-1320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220345211014795> (accessed June 16, 2023).