

Medicaid Dental Benefit Act (S.3166/H.R.4439)

- ❖ Please cosponsor the Medicaid Dental Benefit Act – S.3166/H.R.4439.
- ❖ The Medicaid Dental Benefit Act would require all state Medicaid programs to provide comprehensive dental care as a component of adult Medicaid coverage.
- ❖ The legislation is sponsored in the House by Reps. Nanette Barragán (D-CA), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Donald Payne (D-NJ), Darren Soto (D-FL), and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) and in the Senate by Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Background

Currently, no minimum requirements for adult dental coverage exist under Medicaid, leaving states to determine which dental benefits, if any, are provided to adult enrollees. This creates a patchwork of state-based dental coverage under Medicaid, with less than half of all states offering extensive dental coverage to adult enrollees. Other states offer emergency-only, limited, or no dental coverage to adults through Medicaid.

Low-income adults are 40% less likely to have visited a dentist in the past 12 months compared to higher-income adults. Cost barriers to oral health care remain a significant issue for adults on Medicaid, leaving many without regular dental care and therefore, exposed to disproportionately high rates of dental disease. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that low-income or uninsured adults are twice as likely to have 1 to 3 untreated cavities and three times as likely to have 4 or more untreated cavities than adults with higher incomes or private insurance.

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. Access to regular dental care can prevent oral disease and other serious health complications for the millions of adults on Medicaid.

S.3166/H.R.4439 Medicaid Dental Benefit Act

The Medicaid Dental Benefit Act would expand comprehensive dental care to all adult Medicaid enrollees. Coverage would include:

- Routine diagnostic and preventive care including, but not limited to, dental cleanings, exams, prophylaxis, fluoride treatments, and X-rays;
- Basic dental services such as fillings and extractions and major dental services such as root canals, crowns, restorations, and both complete and partial dentures including adjustments, repairs, and relines;
- Emergency dental care;
- Temporomandibular disorders and orofacial pain disorder treatment; and
- Other necessary services related to dental and oral health (as defined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services)

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.