

E-News and website blurb

VIRTUAL PEDIATRIC ORAL HEALTH ADVOCACY CONFERENCE PROMOTES KEY AAPD LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY PRIORITIES

On March 1-5, 2021, over 400 AAPD members from 41 states plus D.C. advocated for children's oral health by conducting virtual/online visits with their members of Congress and Congressional staff. AAPD participants included members of the Council on Government Affairs, PAC Steering Committee, and Executive Committee. 32 AAPD state Public Policy Advocates participated. **63 pediatric dentistry residency programs were represented, with more than 280 residents in attendance.** The AAPD held a special pre-conference advocacy orientation and training session solely for residents via a Zoom webinar.

The week kicked off with a Zoom webinar briefing session for all participants. AAPD's Washington representative Michael Gilliland from Hogan Lovells provided an overview of the new Congress and Administration. AAPD COO & General Counsel C. Scott Litch provided talking points for the key AAPD public policy issues to be discussed during virtual Congressional visits. The session concluded with a mock Congressional visit featuring AAPD Congressional Liaison Dr. Heber Simmons, Jr. AAPD President-elect Dr. Jeannie Beauchamp, and Anna Weinstein of Hogan Lovells.

The specific advocacy requests made by attendees during virtual Congressional visits are summarized below:

HRSA TITLE VII PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY APPROPRIATIONS AND DFLRP TAX RELIEF

- ***Provide FY 2022 funding of \$46 million for the HRSA Title VII Primary Care Dental Training Cluster and related oral health programs, with not less than \$14 million for Pediatric Dentistry Training programs including a preference for pediatric dentistry faculty in the dental faculty loan repayment program per report language in FY 2021.***

Congresswoman Julia Brownley (D-Calif. 26th) for the fourth straight year circulated a *Dear Colleague* letter in support of Fiscal Year 2022 funding of Title VII Pediatric Dentistry. This letter, to be sent to the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, was circulated on March 12 with a sign-on deadline of April 9. AAPD participants followed up with House Members (those not on the Appropriations Committee) they met with to request a sign-on.

- ***Co-sponsor and pass legislation to make the Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Program (DFLRP) non-taxable to recipients. Co-sponsor S. 449 or H.R. 1285.***

Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Tax Relief Bills Introduced in Congress

Legislation to alleviate taxation on Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Program (DFLRP) awardees was introduced in the U.S. Senate and House on February 24, 2021, to coincide with National Children’s Dental Health Month. This is the top legislative priority for the AAPD in 2021. Unless the tax code is amended, individual recipients of DFLRP must pay income tax on their awards.

Congressional leaders from the last Congress worked together to reintroduce this bi-partisan legislation. The Senate bill (S. 449) was introduced by Senators Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), and the House bill (H.R. 1285) was introduced by Congresswoman Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y. 9th), Congresswoman Grace Meng (D-N.Y. 6th), Congressman (and dentist) Mike Simpson (R-Idaho 2nd), and Congressman (and dentist) Paul Gosar (R-Ariz. 4th).

A press release from Senator Cardin is available on his website.¹ This includes a quote from AAPD President Dr. Jessica Y. Lee. The DFLRP was created due to the significant difficulties in recruiting qualified individuals to fill faculty positions, especially acute in pediatric dentistry. As noted, this legislation would exclude from gross income DFLRP awards under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. By alleviating taxation of such payments to the individual, this legislation will make the program even more effective in recruiting and retaining pediatric dental faculty.

ENSURING LASTING SMILES ACT

- ***Co-sponsor and pass the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act, legislation that would require all private group and individual health plans to cover the full medically necessary treatment of patients with congenital anomalies, including related dental procedures.***

The *Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act* was re-introduced in the U.S. Senate and House on March 16 with a strong show of bi-partisan support. The new bill numbers are S. 754 and H.R. 1916. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), a leader in this effort, issued a press release that referenced all endorsing organizations including the AAPD.² As of April 5, 2021, S. 754 had 32 co-sponsors and H.R. 1916 had 156 co-sponsors.

¹ <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/cardin-and-wicker-team-with-clarke-gosar-simpson-and-meng-to-promote-loan-forgiveness-to-recruit-more-dentists>

² <https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/ensuring-lasting-smiles-act-2021>

ACCESS TO OPERATING ROOMS FOR PEDIATRIC DENTISTS

- **Contact the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and ask that the agency move forward this year to ensure dental rehabilitative services can be provided to children (including those with special health care needs) and the frail elderly. CMS needs to do two things: set up a new billing code for use by hospitals, and propose in the CY 2022 HOPPS rule (expected out in July 2021) that the code also be covered for use by ambulatory surgery centers.**

The AAPD is developing a Congressional group letter to CMS in support of this effort. Advocacy efforts are being closely coordinated with the ADA and AAOMS, in conjunction with the Washington, D.C. consulting/law firm Powers, Plyes, Sutter, and Verville.

Fact sheets used in these virtual Congressional visits are available on the AAPD website at

<https://www.aapd.org/advocacy/legislative-and-regulatory-issues/legislative-and-regulatory-fact-sheets/>.

The AAPD sincerely thank all those members who took time from their busy schedules to participant in this important advocacy effort. Many thanks to the pediatric dentistry residency program directors for facilitating their resident's participation in this program.

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