

## Statement of the American Dental Education Association Advocating a Dental Benefit in Medicare

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The American Dental Education Association (ADEA) believes that a comprehensive dental benefit should be part of any comprehensive public or private health care coverage plan and should be available to every person.

Oral health care is essential care. Congress has the historic and unprecedented opportunity to recognize that oral health is essential to whole health and warrants creating such a benefit in Medicare. We know that gum disease is related to diabetes and cardiovascular disease. We know that early detection of oral cancers is fundamental to survival. We know that untreated dental abscesses can lead to death. We also know that these conditions disproportionately affect persons over 60 years of age.

According to the Federal Reserve report, *Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2020*, dental care was the most frequently skipped care due to an inability to pay. Oral health services are crucial to the general health of the elderly and persons with disabilities, who often have difficulty accessing dental care. This puts them at greater risk of complications from other chronic health conditions, which leads to increased health care costs and burdens on emergency rooms which are often ill-equipped to address patients' oral health needs.

We encourage the adoption of legislation that expands Medicare coverage to a broad range of oral health care services for all and provides reimbursement for those services at rates commensurate with the high quality of care provided.