

January 27, 2022

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of our 162,000 dentist members, the American Dental Association (ADA) writes to commend you for your leadership on veterans' oral health care. The ADA has prioritized oral health equity for our nation's veterans, and appreciates the opportunity to share in your efforts towards improving veterans' oral health. We would also like to share with you some of the ways the ADA and dentists across the nation are addressing veterans' oral health care needs.

The ADA strongly supports Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dentistry, where veterans receive comprehensive dental care benefits. Eligible veterans should be able to visit conveniently located VA dental clinics, and veterans across the country should have access to dentists. ADA was glad to see these issues addressed in sections 5 and 7 of your bill, the Veterans Dental Care Eligpractice dentistry within the VA for five years or more at a high need location. The reimbursement amount would be \$100,000 per dentist, \$20,000 per oral surgeon, and \$10,000 per dental hygienist participating in the program. ADA strongly believes that student loan relief is a powerful incentive for dentists to serve populations like veterans who suffer from disparities in oral health.

Like you, the ADA is committed to ensuring that veterans have access to oral health care. ADA policy supports authorization of resources within VA Medical Centers to assist veterans in identifying and utilizing dental services offered by federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), not for profit dental care facilities, and volunteer dental professionals. ADA policy also supports the work of component and constituent dental associations, dental organizations, societies and dentists to develop new programs with outreach strategies to assist veterans with unmet dental treatment needs, and to serve as a resource in finding dental homes for veterans.

The ADA has been deeply involved with the VA's oral health pilot program, VETSmile, from the start, VETSmile is a collaboration between the VA and community dental care providers to enhance Veterans' access to free and discounted dental services. ADA immediately

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began collaborating with the VA Center for Care and Payment Innovation (CCPI) on finding

- Facilitating the sharing of “best practices” of organizations/programs providing charitable oral health services to veterans among attendees and the public via the creation of a best practices document;
- Development of a continuing education course for dentists on veterans’ oral health;
- Discussion of opportunities and challenges, and how organizations and programs can better work together to provide care to the veteran population; and
- Determining what role a national organization like the ADA can have in ongoing efforts.

Ultimately, the Give Veterans a Smile summit has the potential to improve access to care for millions of veterans nationwide.

The nation’s dentists are proud to be able to serve the oral health needs of those who have served our country so well. We greatly appreciate your leadership in addressing veterans’ oral health, and stand ready to work with you to assist in improving the oral health of veterans in need.

Please contact Megan Mortimer at mortimerm@ada.org or (202) 701-9593 to facilitate further discussion.

Sincerely,

/s/

Cesar R. Sabates, D.D.S.
President

/s/

Raymond A. Cohlma, D.D.S.
Executive Director

CRS:RAC:mm