Community Statement on Medicare Coverage for 
Medically Necessary Oral and Dental Health Therapies

The undersigned organizations are proud to join in support of Medicare coverage for medically-necessary oral/dental health therapies.

It is well established that chronic diseases disproportionately impact Medicare beneficiaries and impose a substantial cost on the federal government. It is also well established that untreated oral microbial infections are closely linked to a wide range of costly chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and stroke. In addition, oral diseases have been documented by researchers and medical specialty societies as precluding, delaying, and even jeopardizing medical treatments such as organ and stem cell transplantation, heart valve repair or replacement, cancer chemotherapies, placement of orthopedic prostheses, and management of autoimmune diseases.

Despite these factors, most Medicare beneficiaries do not currently receive oral/dental care even when medically necessary for the treatment of Medicare-covered diseases. In fact, Medicare coverage extends to the treatment of all microbial infections except for those relating to the teeth and periodontium. There is simply no medical justification for this exclusion, especially in light of the broad agreement among health care providers that such care is integral to the medical management of numerous diseases and medical conditions. Moreover, the lack of medically necessary oral/dental care heightens the risk of costly medical complications, increasing the financial burden on Medicare, beneficiaries, and taxpayers.

A number of major insurance carriers provide medically-necessary oral and dental coverage to targeted enrollees with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, head/neck cancers, and transplants. According to some reports, such coverage has realized important benefits, including markedly lower hospitalization and emergency department admission rates as well as substantial cost reductions. On a further note, veterans getting care through the Veterans Health Administration receive medically adjunctive oral/dental treatment in many instances when a dental diagnosis affects their medical prognosis. These are all important steps forward, and medically necessary oral/dental healthcare should be provided in traditional Medicare as well.

The Medicare program and all its beneficiaries should not be without the vital clinical and fiscal benefits of coverage for medically necessary oral/dental health therapies. Given the significant potential to improve health outcomes and reduce program costs, we urge Congress and the Administration to explore options for extending such evidence-based coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries.
Epilepsy Foundation
Families USA
Florida Health Justice Project
Georgia AIDS Coalition
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing
Hawai‘i Oral Health Coalition
Hawai‘i Children's Action Network Speaks!
Head and Neck Cancer Alliance
Health Care For All (MA)
Health Care Is a Human Right WA
Health Care Voices
Healthy Living and Learning Center
Heartland Alliance
Henry Schein Cares Foundation
HIV Medicine Association
Hispanic Dental Association
International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
Island Liaison, Inc.
John A. Hartford Foundation
Jon C Burr Foundation
Justice in Aging
Kentucky Oral Health Coalition
Klamath Basin Oral Health Coalition
Lakeshore Foundation
Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of America
Maryland Dental Action Coalition
Massachusetts ME/CFS and FM Assoc
Medicaid[Medicare]CHIP Services Dental Association
Medicare Rights Center
Mended Hearts
Mental Health America
Metro New York Health Care for All
Minnesota Dental Therapy Association
myNEXUS
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Dental Plans
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Consumers League
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Dental Association
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Health Law Program
National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health
National Kidney Foundation
National League for Nursing
National Medical Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Network for Oral Health Access
National Osteoporosis Foundation
National Rural Health Association
National Stroke Association
North American Transplant Coordinators Organization
Northwest Harvest
Nursing Interventions for Health System Elders
NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing
Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund
Oklahoma Policy Institute
Oncology Nursing Society
Oral Cancer Foundation
Oral Health Kansas
Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice Program
Oral Health Ohio
Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
Our Mother's Voice
PA Coalition for Oral Health
Pacific Dental Services Foundation
Parkinson's Foundation
Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative
Pennsylvania Health Access Network
PEW Dental Campaign
Piedmont Regional Dental Clinic
PRC
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Pride At Work - WA North, Mt. Kulshan Chapter
Procter & Gamble
ProHEALTH Dental
Project Accessible Oral Health
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
Renal Healthcare Association
Renal Physicians Association
Research!America
Santa Fe Group
School-Based Health Alliance
Scleroderma Foundation
Senior Charity Care Foundation
Senior Mobile Dental
Sepsis Alliance
Sjögren’s Foundation
Smiles To Go, LLC
Social Security Works
Society for Transplant Social Workers
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer
Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc
Texas Parent to Parent
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Bingham Program
The CornerStone Community Development Center
The Gerontological Society of America
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The National Forum of ESRD Networks
The Society for Thoracic Surgeons
The TMJ Association
Third Way
Tri-Area Community Health
Trust for America’s Health
United Health Organization
United Network for Organ Sharing
UUFHCT
Virginia Community Healthcare Association
Virginia Health Catalyst
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Rural Health Association
Washington Healthcare Access Alliance
Wayne County Oral Health Organization
Wesley Living Woodland Homes
West Central Initiative
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Winters Elder Day Council
WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease