

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 13, 2015

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor of California

The Honorable Kevin de León  
President Pro Tempore  
California State Senate

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
Speaker  
California State Assembly

The Honorable Bob Huff  
Senate Republican Leader  
California State Senate

The Honorable Kristen Olsen  
Assembly Republican Leader  
California State Assembly

Dear Governor Brown and Legislative Leaders:

We write to encourage you to prioritize investments in oral health in the state's final 2015-16 budget. As you know, oral health is a vitally important and underappreciated part of our nation's health care system. Left untreated, relatively minor dental issues can become major health emergencies, resulting in devastating outcomes for patients and millions of dollars in medical spending that was avoidable with proper preventative care. Additionally, dental pain and emergencies among children lead to absences from school and lower academic performance. These problems are particularly acute among lower-income children, who frequently lack access to dental care and primary care. Access to primary care is critical to ensure overall health, and oral health is an integral component of primary care, particularly for children.

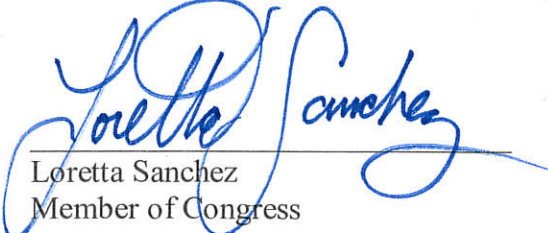
As you know, Denti-Cal – which provides dental services to beneficiaries enrolled in California's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal – is a partnership between the federal government and the State. We have grown concerned about the state of the Denti-Cal program and its ability to meet the needs of the roughly 12 million low-income Californians who are now eligible for benefits. We were particularly troubled by the findings of the California State Auditor's Report on Denti-Cal, issued in December 2014. For example, the report found that among the 5.1 million children enrolled in Medi-Cal in fiscal year 2013, 56% did not receive dental care. The State Auditor linked this low utilization rate to a lack of access to participating dental providers. In turn, the State Auditor linked these low participation rates to the Denti-Cal program's low reimbursement rates to dental providers, which are set by the state.

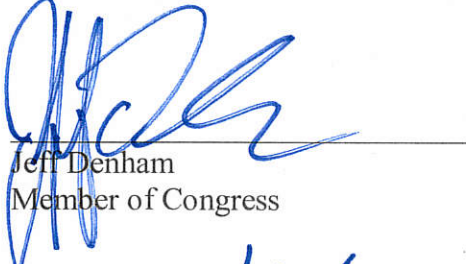
In fact, California has not increased its reimbursement rates for Denti-Cal since fiscal year 2000-01, and rates were cut an additional 10% in September 2013. As a result, the State Auditor found that Denti-Cal reimbursement rates for the ten most common procedures in 2012 averaged \$21.60, or just 35% of the national average of \$61.96. This has had a significantly negative impact on the number of dentists in California still

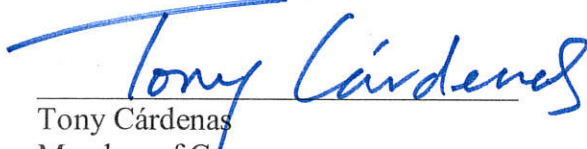
willing and able to participate in the program, even those who have long been enrolled in Denti-Cal.

We recognize that California faces many competing budget pressures. However, for Denti-Cal to be a meaningful benefit, enrollees must have access to care. The State Auditor's report suggests that the Denti-Cal program is already struggling to fulfill its primary objectives. For all of these reasons, we urge you to prioritize improvements to the Denti-Cal program in this year's budget.

Sincerely,

  
Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

  
Jeff Denham  
Member of Congress

  
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

  
Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress

  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

  
Sam Farr  
Member of Congress


  
Linda Sánchez  
Member of Congress

  
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

  
Grace Napolitano  
Member of Congress

  
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

  
Raul Ruiz  
Member of Congress

  
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



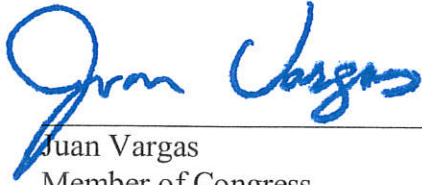
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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



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Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress