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June 1, 2015

Dear Dr. Tooks and Members of the Commission on Dental Accreditation:

We write to you as a national group of educators, dentists, dental hygienists, health advocates, and community members who are deeply invested in improving the nation's oral health. We would like to first thank you again for adopting national education standards for dental therapy education programs. This was an important step forward in the effort to improve access to dental care for all Americans.

We are writing to you now to urge the Commission to continue moving forward, and to implement these standards.

As the Commission considers implementing national standards, it is critical to remember that there is a significant need for better access to routine and preventive dental care. With 181 million Americans going without a dental visit in 2010 according to the American Dental Association, we need to pursue innovative approaches to delivering care.

Dental therapists are already making a significant impact in expanding access to care for underserved populations. There are currently three dental therapy programs training dental therapists in the United States: two in Minnesota and one in Alaska. Since the passage of legislation in Maine last year, we anticipate additional training programs launched within the next two years. Each program is graduating competent providers. In Minnesota the two programs have produced 42 graduates and it is anticipated that by 2016 there will be 71 graduates. In Alaska, 25 dental therapists are practicing and have increased access to care for over 40,000 Alaska Natives.

A 2014 Minnesota Department of Health report showed that dental therapists help increase access to care. It also noted that employing dental therapists benefits dental practices: it increases a practice's ability to see Medicaid patients, increases the total number of patients, increases team communication, allows dentists to perform more complicated procedures while delegating routine care, and provides a cost benefit that helps practices offset low Medicaid rates.

As the dental therapy movement spreads and gains momentum, there is more need than ever for national standards to be established and enforced. Over 15 states are currently exploring emerging workforce models to address their dental needs. Rather than continue to progress on a state-by-state basis that requires state dental boards to certify and/or accredit educational programs in each respective state, we urge CODA to implement standards and a national accrediting process for dental therapy education programs.

Thank you again for adopting standards and for considering our request that the Commission moves forward with implementation dental therapy education standards. Please contact David Jordan with any questions: djordan@communitycatalyst.org.

Sincerely,

List of signers as follows:

Tribal Organizations, Foundations and National Organizations:

Community Catalyst
National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
National Indian Health Board (NIHB)
Families USA
Self-Governance Communication & Education Tribal Consortium
Pew Children's Dental Campaign
REACH Healthcare Foundation
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Center for Native American Youth
The Sullivan Alliance to Transform Health Professions

Professional Dental Associations:

National Dental Association	North Dakota Dental Hygienists' Association
American Academy of Dental Therapists	Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA)	South Carolina Dental Hygiene Association
American Association for Community Dental Programs	Washington State Dental Hygienists' Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association Massachusetts	Vermont Dental Hygienists' Association
Maine Dental Hygienists' Association	Texas Dental Hygienists' Association
New Hampshire Dental Hygienists' Association	

Education Organizations and Educators:

American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC)
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
National Network of Health Career Programs in Two Year Colleges (NN2)
Ona Canfield, Director, Dental Hygiene Program, Seattle Central College
Louis Fiset, DDS - Curriculum Coordinator, Alaska Dental Health Aide Therapist Program,
University of Washington
Mary E. Williard, DDS, Director, Dental Health Aide Therapist Educational Program,
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

National and Community Leaders:

Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., Former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services
Henrie Treadwell, PhD., Research Professor, Moorehouse School of Medicine
Michael Bird, Past-president of the American Public Health Association
Paul Nannis, Former City of Milwaukee Health Director
Samantha Petrone, RDH, BSDH - VT

FQHCs and Safety-Net Clinics:

Connecticut Institute For Communities, Inc. (CIFIC)
HealthCore Clinic - Wichita, KS
People's Health & Wellness Clinic – Barre, VT

Dentists:

Terry Batliner, DDS	Kevin Wallace, DDS
Frank Catalanotto,, DMD	Lawrence Hill, DDS, MPH
Burton Edelstein, DDS, MPH	Melinda Miner, DDS
Caswell A. Evans, DDS, MPH	Lyle McClellan, DDS, Willamette Dental Group
Alex Narvaez, DDS	Patricia Tarren, DDS, Hennepin County Medical Center
Allen Hindin, DDS, MPH	Ron Nagel, DDS, MPH
Ben Gibberman, DDS	Ronald J. Romero, DDS
Daniel N. Minnis, DDS	Tom Bornstein DDS, Director of Dental Services, SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)
David S. Gesko, DDS, Dental Director & Senior Vice President, Health Partners	Todd Hartsfield, DDS
Edward Sterling, DDS	William Hitt, DDS
Edwin Allgair Jr., DDS	
Jay W. Friedman, DDS, MPH	
Jerry Benis, DDS	
Kenneth A. Bolin, DDS, MPH	

State and Community-based Organizations:

Adelante, Inc. - Ohio
AIDS Resource Center Ohio
Asian Services in Action, Inc. - Ohio
Center for Closing the Health Gap -
Cincinnati, Ohio
Central Community House - Columbus,
OH
Central Vermont Community Action
Council
Children's Alliance - Washington
Clintonville-Beechwood Community
Resources Center
Common Good Ohio
Community Action Commission of
Belmont County - Ohio
Community Action Corporation of
Washington Morgan Counties - Ohio
Community of Vermont Elders (COVE)
Community Organizing Center -
Columbus, OH
Contact Center - Cincinnati, OH
Disability Rights Vermont, Inc.
Gladden Community House - Columbus,
OH
Health Action New Mexico
Health Partners of Western Ohio
Hocking Athens, Perry Community
Action Agency - Ohio
Huckleberry House - Columbus, OH
Kansas Action for Children & Voices for
Children Foundation
Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC
National Alliance on Mental Illness of
Ohio
New Mexico Health Resources
Northside Health Advisory Committee -
Columbus, OH
Ohio AIDS Coalition
Ohio Association of Foodbanks
Ohio Head Start Health Advisory
Committee
Ohio Public Health Association
Over The Rhine Community Housing -
Cincinnati, OH
People's Empowerment Coalition of
Ohio
Progress Ohio
Shared Harvest Foodbank - Ohio
UHCAN Ohio
Vermont Legal Aid's Office of the Health
Care Advocate
Vermont Oral Health Care for All
Coalition
Vermont Public Interest Research Group
(VPIRG)
Voices for Vermont's Children
Washington Community Action Network
West Ohio Foodbank
Westside Community Health Advisory
Committee - Columbus, OH
Youth Development, Inc. - Elev8 New
Mexico