



October 24, 2019

To the Office of Congressman Elijah Cummings:

On behalf of the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN), we wish to express our sincere condolences on the loss of the Honorable Elijah Cummings. We are deeply saddened by his passing, and grateful that we are in Washington, D.C. at a moment in which we can honor his legacy. Congressman Cummings' unwavering dedication to improving oral health, health equity, and social justice in this nation made him an unparalleled champion for the issues promoted by this network.

Congressman Cummings led efforts to expand dental coverage through Medicaid, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as to improve access to oral health care. Our country's oral health safety net for children is much to his credit, a project he took on with passion following the death of Deamonte Driver, a 12-year-old Marylander who died from an untreated tooth infection.

Congressman Cummings also served as the co-chair of the Congressional Oral Health Caucus and introduced legislation to address dental provider shortages, increase dental provider participation in Medicaid, expand National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs to include dental care, and support programs to educate non-dental professionals about oral health. He also worked to increase access to dental care through school-based and community health centers, and secure additional funding for oral health research.

The Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) includes over 2,000 members across 800 organizations from all 50 states and DC committed to social justice and health equity, including about 50 members from the great state of Maryland. While we are not all assembled here in Washington today, it is on behalf of this whole community that we wish to recognize Congressman Cummings for his unprecedented work and to thank all of you that have been a part of it. His tireless efforts to improve access to oral health care, particularly for disadvantaged children, has changed lives for countless Marylanders and millions of people throughout the country.

Sincerely,

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Mary Backley, Maryland Dental Action Coalition

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Melissa Burroughs, Families USA

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*We catalyze a network to take on America's oral health challenges so that everyone has an equitable chance to thrive.*

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