



In his first address to a joint session of Congress, President Biden affirmed his commitment to expand access to health coverage and improve Medicare benefits. These are critical steps toward creating a more affordable and equitable health care system. **The Medicare Oral Health Coalition – which includes leading organizations representing oral health, health care consumers, older adults, people with disabilities, patients, providers, industry, social service, and others – urges President Biden and Congress to realize these goals by including Medicare oral health coverage in the next legislative recovery package.**

Oral health care is a key determinant of economic stability, continued employment opportunities, improved social connectedness, and overall health and wellness. It is impossible to fully address our nation's underlying economic, employment, or pandemic recovery needs without ensuring that people have access to oral health coverage. Adding a dental benefit to Medicare Part B is a health and economic policy that is key to health equity.

More than 40 million Medicare enrollees are without dental coverage, making oral health care unaffordable and out of reach for many. The people and communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately disadvantaged by this lack of coverage, and would benefit the most from its addition. For example, seven out of 10 Black Medicare enrollees and six out of 10 Hispanic enrollees did not see a dentist in the last year, compared to four out of ten non-Hispanic white enrollees. Geographically, 20 percent of rural seniors have not seen a dentist or visited a dental clinic for more than five years, as compared to 14 percent of non-rural seniors. Investing in oral health coverage would be an investment in communities that have been disproportionately likely to suffer the health and financial impacts of the pandemic.

**Families need support now, and polling consistently shows that health care is top of mind for voters. We urge Congress to prioritize Medicare dental coverage as it crafts its next legislative package.**

*The Medicare Oral Health Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that all Medicare enrollees have affordable, comprehensive oral health coverage as part of their overall health coverage. Current members include Families USA, AARP, National Rural Health Association, National Association of Community Health Centers, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, Justice in Aging, Center for Medicare Advocacy, The Arc of the United States, American Dental Hygienists' Association, National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels, the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Community Catalyst, the Gerontological Society of America, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) Inc. The views expressed by the Coalition do not necessarily represent those of individual members.*

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