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MEDICARE DENTAL BILL INTRODUCED

CHICAGO, January 7, 2019 — On January 4, Senator Ben Cardin from Maryland introduced S.22, the [Medicare Dental Benefit Act of 2019](#) — a bill that, if enacted, would allow older adults and persons with disabilities to access their oral healthcare as they do their medical care — through Medicare.

During the past four years, Oral Health America, along with partners in aging, health policy and dental organizations, have worked together to advocate for adding a dental benefit to Medicare Part B under a shared commitment to improve the health and well-being of all Medicare beneficiaries. S.22 recognizes that oral health is connected to total body health by covering services that are necessary to prevent disease and promote oral health, restore oral structures to health and function, and treat emergency conditions. A provision under Medicare Part B signifies that all beneficiaries would receive coverage, including those enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans.

People face many barriers when it comes to accessing oral healthcare including a lack of educational resources and the ability to pay for needed care. Additionally, poor oral health has multiple implications relative to chronic other diseases. Poor oral health impacts nutrition as well as mental and social health and the ability to live independently in the community. Through OHA's Tooth Wisdom®: *Get Smart About Your Mouth* community workshops, hygienists are equipping older adults with tips on how to maintain a healthy mouth while aging. At the beginning of class, participants are asked why oral health is important to them. One Chicagoan exclaimed, "To kiss!"

"For Oral Health America, S.22 is more than adding dental and oral health services to Medicare Part B; it's about ensuring people can take part in their day to day activities like eating nutritious foods without pain, playing with their grandchildren without embarrassment and feeling confident about kissing their significant others!" says Beth Truett, President & CEO of Oral Health America.

OHA commends and thanks Senator Cardin for his steadfast leadership and support in improving oral health access across the lifespan. Working alongside other advocates, Oral Health America looks forward to attaining the bipartisan support needed to pass S.22 in Congress. [Read the full text of S22.](#)

For more information visit oralhealthamerica.org or email advocacy@OHA-CHI.org.

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About Oral Health America

OHA's mission is to change lives by connecting communities with resources to drive access to care, increase health literacy and advocate for policies that improve overall health through better oral health for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. Through Smiles Across America[®], which serves 447,000 children annually, the Wisdom Tooth Project[®], which reaches tens of thousands of older adults, and the Campaign for Oral Health Equity, which prioritize oral health alongside other chronic diseases, OHA helps Americans of all ages to have a healthy mouth and to understand the importance of oral health for overall health. For more information about Oral Health America, please visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.

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