
SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8010

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Senators Frockt, Dhingra, Randall, and Keiser

1 TO THE HONORABLE DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
4 THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,
7 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

8 WHEREAS, Medicare provides health benefits for nearly sixty
9 million people nationally, including more than one million Washington
10 residents, making it an essential provider of health care for older
11 adults and disabled individuals; and

12 WHEREAS, The federal Medicare statute currently excludes coverage
13 for almost all oral health care, leaving seniors at great risk for
14 tooth decay and disease; and

15 WHEREAS, According to a 2017 Senior Oral Health Survey by Arcora
16 Foundation, only sixty-one percent of Washington seniors report
17 having dental insurance. Only forty-five percent of low-income
18 seniors report having dental insurance; and

19 WHEREAS, Among Washington seniors not accessing dental care, cost
20 was cited as the main barrier; and

21 WHEREAS, According to the behavioral risk factor surveillance
22 system, 2016, twenty-eight percent of Washington seniors ages 65 and
23 over have severe tooth loss (six or more teeth) due to decay, and one

1 in ten seniors have total tooth loss. Among low-income seniors (less
2 than 15,000 dollars per year), more than one in four have total tooth
3 loss; and

4 WHEREAS, Dental care access for seniors is an equity issue:
5 Seniors of color are more likely to have tooth decay and tooth loss
6 compared to white seniors; and

7 WHEREAS, Oral health is essential to nutrition and overall health
8 and wellness, especially for older adults:

9 (1) Dental pain and tooth loss can prevent seniors from
10 maintaining a nutritious diet; nearly two out of five low-income
11 seniors report they "very often" struggle with biting and chewing due
12 to poor oral health;

13 (2) Oral disease is linked to heart disease, stroke, and
14 Alzheimer's. Untreated gum disease can exacerbate diabetes
15 complications; and

16 (3) Untreated oral disease leads to more costly medical
17 conditions; and

18 WHEREAS, A comprehensive Medicare dental benefit will improve
19 Washington seniors' health status and overall well-being, and reduce
20 medical expenses;

21 NOW THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that Congress
22 include coverage for dental care in the federal Medicare program.

23 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
24 transmitted to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President of the United
25 States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the
26 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State
27 of Washington.

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