

Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA)

S. 560/H.R. 1379

The American Dental Association (ADA), as the nation's oldest and largest dental professional organization, representing over 163,000 members; and the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) representing more than 24,000 dental students in 66 dental schools across the U.S., support S. 560/H.R. 1379, the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), and urge you to co-sponsor this important bipartisan bill. By doing so, you can ensure that children suffering from congenital anomalies and birth defects are able to receive the treatment they need.

S. 560 is sponsored by Sens. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and H.R.1379 is sponsored by Reps. Collin Peterson (D-MN) and Denver Riggleman (R-VA).

One in every 33 children in the United States is born with a congenital anomaly or birth defect that affects the way they look, develop or function. A number of these congenital anomalies include severe oral and facial defects such as cleft lip or palate, skeletal and maxillofacial deformities, hypodontia (absence of teeth), and enamel hypoplasia. These anomalies can interfere with a child's ability to breathe, speak, and/or eat in a normal manner. Specialized surgery is needed to correct these anomalies. These procedures are reconstructive in nature and are performed to correct abnormal structures of the body.

Despite this, many insurance companies consider these services to be cosmetic, and while they may cover the preliminary surgeries, they will delay or deny follow-up or corrective procedures, including dental work related to the anomaly. This can further delay a child's developmental milestones. As a result, families denied care by private health insurance companies may instead have to turn to safety-net programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

ELSA would require all private group and individual health plans to cover medically necessary services resulting from a congenital anomaly or birth defect. This would include inpatient and outpatient care and reconstructive services and procedures, as well as adjunctive dental, orthodontic, or prosthodontic support. The bill specifically exempts cosmetic surgery.

We urge you to co-sponsor ELSA to help patients with craniofacial anomalies and ensure they have the necessary coverage to restore their ability to function.

Information

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