

Advocates Urge Florida to Become 15th State to Pass Dental Therapy Legislation

More than 140 organizations and individuals have signed onto a letter urging the Florida Legislation to pass HB 1173 and SB 1254.

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, February 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 140



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*Dr. Frank Catalanotto,
president of Floridians for
Dental Access*

organizations and individuals are urging the Florida Legislature to pass HB 1173 and SB 1254. The bills, brought forth by Floridians for Dental Access, American Children's Campaign and Florida Dental Hygienist Association, would authorize the licensing of mid-level oral health providers called "dental therapists" to increase dental access and improve the overall health of Floridians. HB 1173 has already passed two Florida House committees - House Healthcare Regulation Subcommittee and House Healthcare Appropriations Subcommittee.

Oral health in Florida is among the worst in the nation. Florida leads the nation in the number of individuals living in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. Nearly 6 million Floridians live in these dental deserts, causing them to live in pain, miss work or school or visit the emergency room for preventable dental conditions. Florida hospitals billed over \$550 million in 2021 for emergency room and hospital admissions related to non-traumatic dental conditions.

"Florida spends more on treating the consequences of poor oral health than any other state in the nation and has the least to show for it," stated Dr. Frank Catalanotto, president of Floridians for Dental Access. "Hospitals are the most expensive and least equipped place to treat preventable dental conditions. All they can do is provide temporary pain relief. The pain returns when the antibiotics wear off. And Florida taxpayers are largely picking up the tab."

Poor dental health also affects Florida families' wallets in other ways. According to Roy Miller, president of American Children's Campaign, over \$45 billion of work productivity is lost each year in the United States due to untreated oral disease. Nearly 18% of working adults report the appearance of their teeth affects their ability to interview for a job. This percentage increases to 29% for people with low incomes.

Research data shows that insured individuals who receive treatment for periodontal disease

have fewer hospitalizations and reduced cost of care and fewer hospitalizations for a number of systemic diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Fourteen states have currently authorized the licensing of dental therapists to increase dental access for their citizens. Dental therapists have practiced worldwide for 100 years and in the U.S. for nearly 20 years.

The following are the organizations and individuals who have signed on to a letter supporting HB 1173 and SB 1254 in Florida. Individuals or organizations who would like to see dental access expanded in Florida can [sign the letter here](#).

Organizations Supporting HB 1173 and SB 1254

ACORN Dental Clinic Inc.

American Children's Campaign

American Dental Therapy Association

Association of Black Social Workers, Jax Chapter

Families USA

Florida Association of Community Health Centers

Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions

Florida Dental Hygienists Association

Florida Head Start Association

Florida Keys Area Health Education Center, Inc.

Florida Legal Services, Inc.

Florida Policy Institute

Florida Public Health Association

Florida Rural Health Association

Florida Voices for Health

Floridians for Dental Access

Gulfcoast Legal Services

Gulfcoast South AHEC

Harmon Health Group

Health Council of East Central Florida

Home to You Dental

Jacksonville Center for Advocacy and Social Justice

Jacksonville Urban League

James Madison Institute

Keys AHEC Health Centers (Primary Medical and Oral Health Care)

League of Women Voters Hillsborough

League of Women Voters of Florida

League of Women Voters of Tallahassee

League of Women Voters Lee County

League of Women Voters Palm Beach County

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc

Miami Dade College

National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity

No DK Treatment Systems

North Florida Medical Centers, Inc.

Northeast Florida Medical Society Foundation

Palms Medical Group

Partnership for Child Health/University of Florida--Jacksonville

Pinellas County Urban League

Population Health Consortium of NE Florida

Premier Community HealthCare

Rural Women's Health Project

Suncoast Community Health Centers, Inc.

Suwannee River Area Health Education Center

Tallahassee Urban League Inc.

University of Florida Homeless Outreach and Street Medicine Program

WellFlorida Council

Karen Bonsignori

American Children's Campaign

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