

Action for Dental Health Act of 2018

H.R. 2422 / S. 3016

Background The Action for Dental Health Act was first introduced in the House of Representatives on May 15, 2017. Co-authored by Reps. Robin Kelly (D-IL-2) and Mike Simpson (R-ID-2), the Act passed the House with bipartisan support on February 26, 2018. On June 6, 2018, Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Tim Scott (R-SC) introduced the Act in the Senate. The Act passed the Senate by voice vote on October 10, 2018. The act was signed by the President on December 11, 2018 and became law.

Defining the bill The Action for Dental Health Act aims to expand access to oral care for more Americans, by providing funding for critical oral health initiatives and breaking down barriers that regularly prevent patients from receiving care. The Act reauthorizes grants through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in conjunction with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and funds go towards oral health education, dental disease prevention, and increased access to care. The Act expands the definition of who would be eligible to receive funds, including academic institutions, state dental associations, non-profit community-based organizations, as well as state and local health and/or dental departments.

The Action for Dental Health Act:

1 Provides oral health services to those in need

The Act supports oral health promotion and disease prevention activities at the CDC, such as school-based dental sealant programs and support for community water fluoridation. Through additional funding and resources, the Act also improves oral health education and reduces barriers to care.

2 Expands charitable initiatives

Dentists and dental benefits providers provide millions of dollars in free services to deliver care to those in need across the country. The Action for Dental Health Act expands the list of eligible entities to apply for grant funding to provide more free and discounted care at the local level.

3 Supports underserved populations

As part of HRSA grants under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Act expands programs that provide oral health services in dental health professional shortage areas by establishing dental homes for children and adults, establishing initiatives to reduce the use of emergency departments for dental services, and providing dental care to nursing home residents.

National bipartisan support

"As a physician, I know that dental care is crucial to overall health. Untreated dental disease leads to millions of dollars in preventable dental-related ER visits each year... Action for Dental Health expands the reach of existing community based programs which screen, treat and educate underserved populations connecting patients to dentists who can continue to treat them down the road."

- Sen. Cassidy (R-LA)

"Oral health is an important part of one's overall health and well-being, but many people lack access to these essential services — especially those from underserved communities... This legislation takes a vital step in addressing those gaps and increasing families' access to oral health care and preventive services."

- Sen. Booker (D-NJ)