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Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention (CDC)  
Atlanta GA 30333

February 14, 2011

R. Bruce Donoff, D.M.D., M.D.  
President  
Friends of the National Institute of  
Dental and Craniofacial Research  
1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 607  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Dr. Donoff:

Thank you for your letter expressing concerns of the Friends of the National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial Research (FNIDCR) about the oral health organizational structure at the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Secretary has asked me to respond to you directly on this issue, which is currently an internal CDC discussion. No decision has been made.

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's (NCCDPHP) Division of Oral Health's leads our efforts to promote health and well-being through prevention and control of chronic diseases. Oral health has been an important part of NCCDPHP's mission for more than 15 years. NCCDPHP is fully committed to the Division of Oral Health's mission to prevent and control oral diseases and conditions, and reduce disparities by building the knowledge, tools, and networks that promote healthy behaviors and effective public health practices and programs.

Just to highlight some of our continued commitment to oral health, CDC serves as the lead agency for the *Healthy People 2020* objective for oral health. The Chief Dental Officer of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps reports directly to the Director of NCCDPHP. CDC is a full and active participant in HHS' *2010 Oral Health Initiative* and has publicly committed to developing a National Surveillance Plan in collaboration with the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

We agree that oral health across life stages is an integral part of overall health. Support to state health departments, even those not yet funded, to improve basic oral health remains a cornerstone for CDC efforts. By better integrating CDC's oral health activities at all ages with other chronic disease prevention activities, we expect to enhance our ability to contribute to improved oral health across the lifespan.

Please be assured that CDC is committed to ensuring that oral health activities provide the maximum possible public health impact at every age. I believe that CDC's ability to focus

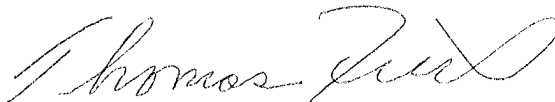
scarce oral health funding on program activities rather than supporting the infrastructure of a division will improve its programmatic impact.

NCCDPHP has successfully nurtured programs of similar size within a larger division for many years. Some of these programs (for example, the arthritis program, the healthy aging program, and the alcohol program) continue to be located within a division and to function successfully.

At CDC, divisions provide administrative, policy, and communications infrastructure to enable their programmatic components to operate effectively with limited categorical funding. Rather than diluting program impact, CDC believes that the ability to focus limited staff and resources on programmatic efforts, rather than division infrastructure, enhances its public health impact. For example, the alcohol program, which is located within the Division of Adult and Community Health (DACH), provided the focus for the October Vital Signs, which highlighted alcohol and binge drinking as important public health issues (found on the Internet at [www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/BingeDrinking/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/BingeDrinking/index.html)). DACH most recently worked closely with the Food and Drug Administration to address the serious problem of caffeinated alcoholic beverages.

CDC values our partnerships with such vital organizations as the FNIDCR, and we look forward to a strengthened partnership between CDC and the Friends as both organizations work together to improve the oral health of Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Frieden".

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director, CDC, and  
Administrator, Agency for Toxic  
Substances and Disease Registry