

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 19, 2011

The Honorable Denny Rehberg  
Chairman  
Labor, Health and Human Services  
and Education Subcommittee  
2358 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Labor, Health and Human Services  
and Education Subcommittee  
1016 Longworth Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to urge you to do what you can in the Fiscal Year 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill to prevent the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) from downgrading the Division of Oral Health (DOH) to branch status.

Dental caries, also known as tooth decay, is a chronic disease. It is five times more common than asthma among children. Research also connects oral disease to adverse pregnancy outcomes, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It is also highly preventable.

The role of the DOH is to advance health promotion and dental disease prevention initiatives. These goals are being accomplished through DOH's national surveillance research, its funding and support for state-based oral disease prevention programs, its development of guidelines and support for reviews of evidence, and its participation in national-level oral health activities that involve state health associations and dental associations.

It is our understanding that when the Appropriations Committee communicated to CDC leadership last year about the need to address redundant programs, oral health was not intended to be part of any reorganization. Therefore, we are disturbed to see that the proposed downgrading of the Division of Oral Health is being included in announced reorganization plans by the Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (CCDPHP).

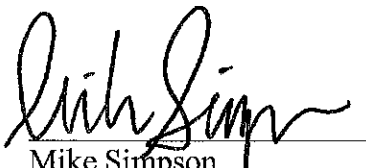
This proposed downgrade is especially disconcerting because a little over a year ago, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the "HHS Oral Health Initiative 2010" which declared that oral health was an HHS-wide priority and included goals for oral health within each agency under HHS' purview. In the announcement, HHS leaders cited the need for the public to understand that good oral health is a major part of good overall health and they declared that oral health promotion/disease prevention, increasing access to care, enhancing


the oral health workforce, and eliminating oral health care disparities were critical to achieving improvements in oral health among Americans.

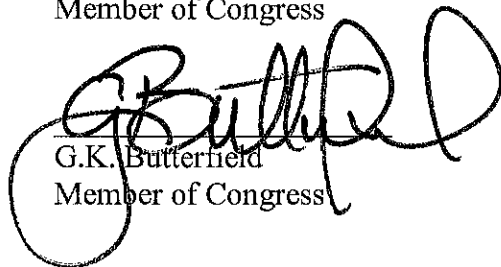
We fear that the downgrading of the DOH to branch status will ultimately – if unintentionally – cause oral health issues to be neglected as the CDC works to combat other chronic diseases affecting Americans. The recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, “Advancing Oral Health in America,” shows that oral health programs within HHS were less effective following a reduction in funding for these programs in the 1960s and 1970s. The IOM report states that “[f]or decades the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has shown a fluctuating commitment to making oral health a national priority.” And it is deeply troubling to us that in referencing the proposed downgrading of the DOH, the IOM report concludes “...such a decision implies that CDC is placing a low priority on oral health.”

Oral health cannot be a low priority for this nation. When HHS announced the Oral Health Initiative, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health, Dr. Garth Graham, stated, “Poor oral health remains a serious national problem.” We could not agree more. We therefore believe that maintaining the Division of Oral Health as a division is a key component to ensuring that the momentum gained in recent years in support of dental disease prevention activities continues to build so that this country can adequately combat this serious problem plaguing our children and adults. Therefore, we urge you to do what you can to maintain the division status of the CDC’s Division of Oral Health in the Fiscal Year 2012 Labor-HHS appropriations legislation developed by the Committee.

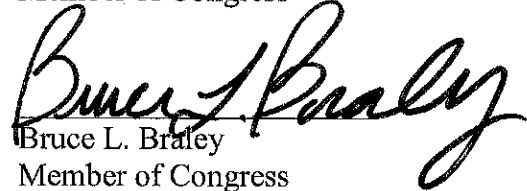
Sincerely,

  
Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress

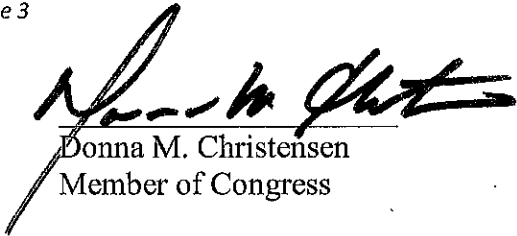
  
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

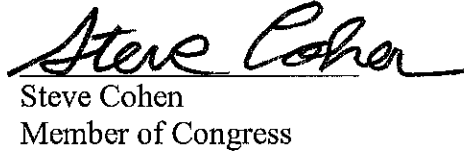
  
G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

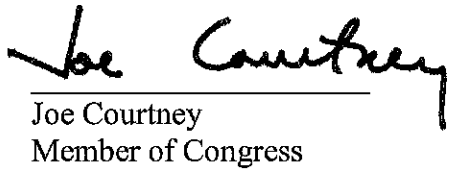
  
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

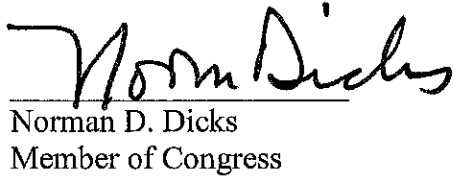
  
Bruce L. Braley  
Member of Congress

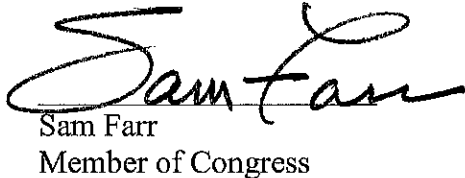
  
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

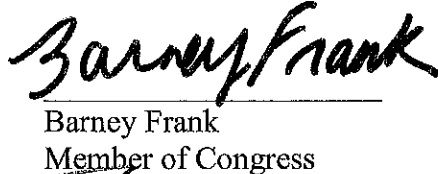
  
Donna M. Christensen  
Member of Congress

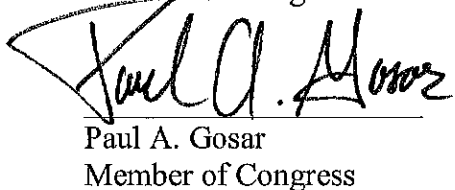
  
Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

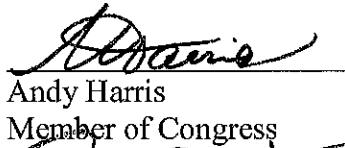
  
Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

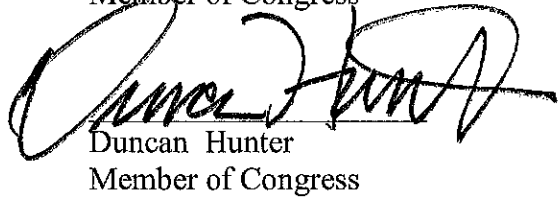
  
Norman D. Dicks  
Member of Congress

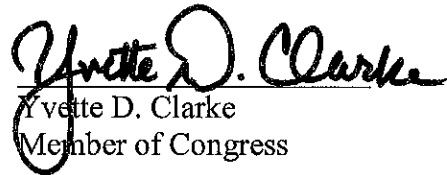
  
Sam Farr  
Member of Congress

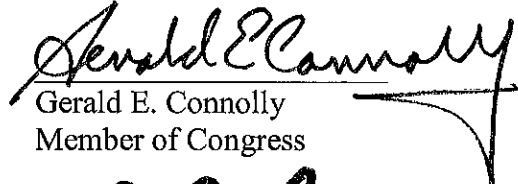
  
Barney Frank  
Member of Congress

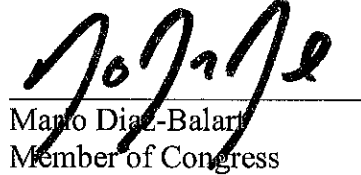
  
Paul A. Gosar  
Member of Congress

  
Andy Harris  
Member of Congress

  
Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress

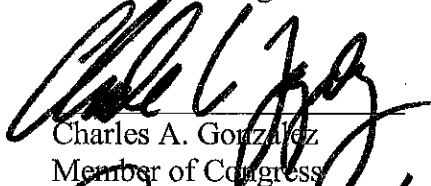
  
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

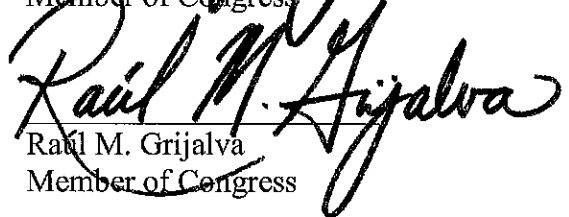
  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

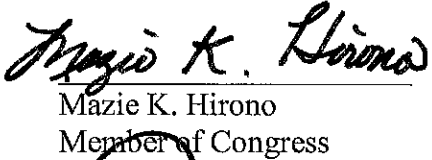
  
Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress

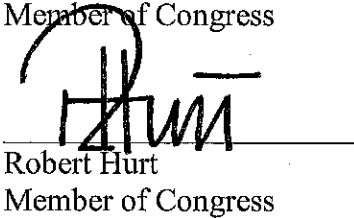
  
Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

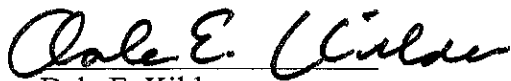
  
Bob Filner  
Member of Congress

  
Charles A. Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

  
Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Mazie K. Hirono  
Member of Congress

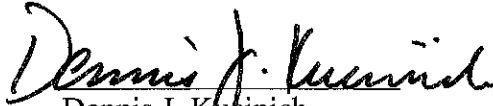
  
Robert Hurt  
Member of Congress



Dale E. Kildee  
Member of Congress



Larry Kissell  
Member of Congress



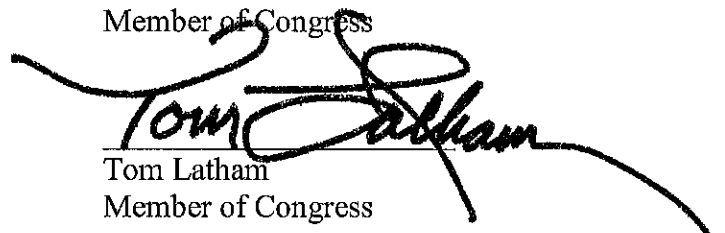
Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress



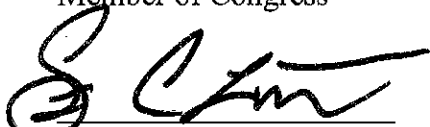
Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress



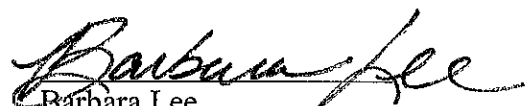
Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Tom Latham  
Member of Congress



Steven C. LaTourette  
Member of Congress



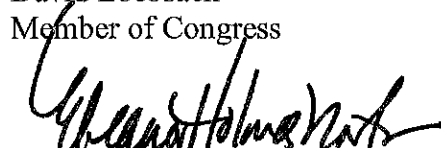
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



David Loebsack  
Member of Congress



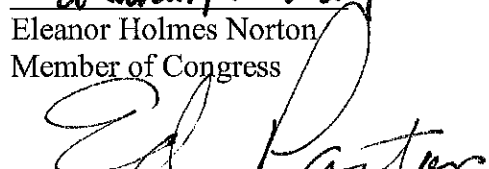
James P. Moran  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Steven M. Palazzo  
Member of Congress



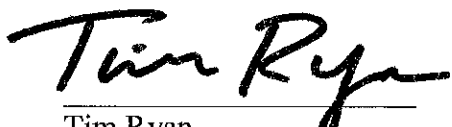
Ed Pastor  
Member of Congress



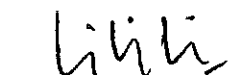
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



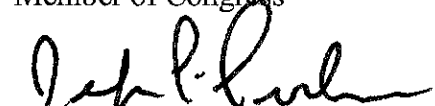
Mike Ross  
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress



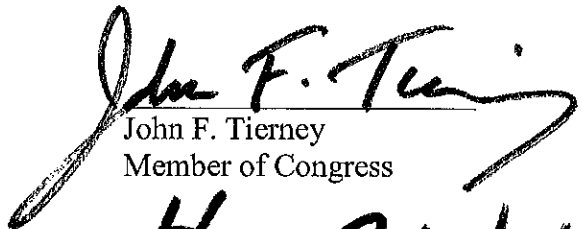
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



John F. Tierney  
Member of Congress



Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress