

February 28, 2019

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst  
111 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
2204 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Denver Riggleman  
1022 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: Support for the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), S. 560/H.R. 1379**

Dear Senators Baldwin and Ernst and Representatives Peterson and Riggleman:

The undersigned organizations write to express our support for S. 560/H.R. 1379, the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA). This bipartisan legislation will have a direct impact on patients and will eliminate the existing burdens that prevent access to necessary diagnosis and treatment for those with congenital anomalies.

We appreciate your leadership in recognizing the importance of ensuring access to the care and services necessary to improve or restore body function or approximate a normal appearance due to a congenital anomaly, such as cleft lip and palate, skeletal and maxillofacial abnormalities, facial paralysis, microtia, hypodontia, and craniosynostosis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies birth defects as “common, costly, and critical” and reports that one in 33 newborns in the United States suffers from a congenital anomaly. Craniofacial anomalies, for example, can restrict a patient’s ability to breathe, eat, and speak in a normal manner. Therefore, highly personalized surgery to repair an anomaly helps the patient grow and function normally. Early intervention by a team of specialists, including plastic surgeons, oral and maxillofacial surgeons, pediatric dentists, orthodontists, dermatologists and speech therapists, is necessary to assess and oversee the patient’s treatment and development, sometimes over the course of several years.

While many private health insurance companies cover the preliminary procedures, they routinely deny or delay follow-up or corrective procedures claiming that they are cosmetic in nature—which fails to recognize the medical conditions of these patients. Delays in medically necessary care can negatively impact a child’s developmental milestones and coverage denials of a child’s reconstructive surgery, can result in families turning to Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or other safety net programs for coverage. That’s why we support the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act, which would require all private group and individual health plans to cover medically necessary services that repair or restore a patient’s anomaly – ensuring patients access to life-saving treatments.

Thank you again for your support and leadership on this important issue. As patients, families and health professionals, we are committed to working with you toward passage of the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology  
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons  
American Association of Orthodontists  
American Association of Women Dentists  
American College of Surgeons  
American Dental Association  
American Society of Dental Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
CCD Smiles  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
Derma Care Access Network  
EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases  
FACES: The National Craniofacial Association  
Foundation for Ichthyosis and Related Skin Types, Inc.  
Genetic Alliance  
International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation  
March of Dimes  
Moebius Syndrome Foundation  
National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
Pathways for Rare and Orphan Studies  
Project Accessible Oral Health  
Rare and Undiagnosed Network  
SunnyStrong  
The APS Type 1 Foundation  
The Marfan Foundation  
The Sturge-Weber Foundation