

Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act

Introduced by U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Bipartisan reform to ensure coverage for congenital anomalies and birth defects

About four percent of children in the U.S. are born with congenital anomalies or birth defects that affect the way they look, develop, or function, often for the rest of their lives. Many born with congenital anomalies suffer from severe oral and facial defects such as cleft lip or palate, skeletal and maxillofacial deformities, hypodontia (absence of teeth), and enamel hypoplasia. Patients who do not have their craniofacial and other anomalies treated face long-term physical and psychological injuries. For example, severe dental anomalies that require surgery and other intensive care are a common symptom of Ectodermal Dysplasias, a rare congenital disease. Individuals who suffer from ED and other craniofacial anomalies can expect to incur significant out of pocket costs on reconstructive oral and dental procedures related to their disorder during their lifetime.

Most health plans provide coverage for congenital anomalies and many states require insurers to provide coverage of any health services related to congenital anomalies or birth defects. Despite this, health plans systematically and routinely deny or delay claims and appeals for certain services, including any oral or dental related procedures- like reconstructive surgery for a cleft palate- under the pretense that such service is merely cosmetic or covered under separate dental plans. This is a common practice across the country and leaves families with the burden of how to pay for their child's treatment or procedures that are necessary to restore their ability to function.

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The Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act would address these coverage denials and delays and ensure that children suffering from congenital anomalies or birth defects get the treatment they need and deserve.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Ensure that all group and individual health plans cover medically necessary services, including needed dental procedures, as a result of congenital abnormalities;
- Stipulate that such coverage include services and procedures that functionally repair or restore any missing or abnormal body part that is medically necessary to achieve normal body functioning or appearance, and clarifies that this includes adjunctive dental, orthodontic or prosthodontic support; and
- Exclude cosmetic procedures or surgery

Support: The Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Dermatology Association, the American Academy of Neurology, the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Association of Orthodontists, the American Association of Pediatric Plastic Surgeons, the American Association of Women Dentists, the American College of Surgeons, the American Dental Association, the American Society of Craniofacial Surgeons, the American Society of Dental Anesthesiologists, the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons, the 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, 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, and the Sturge-Weber Foundation.