

February 10, 2023

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
2306 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bilirakis:

On behalf of the over 159,000 members of the American Dentist Association (ADA), we write to thank you for your leadership on the Veterans Early Treatment for Chronic Ailment Resurgence through Examinations Act of 2023, or the VET CARE Act of 2023. Oral health is an integral component of systemic health, and this bill would further demonstrate the importance of access to high quality dental care for our nation's veterans.

As you know, the VET CARE Act of 2023 would require the Veterans Administration (VA) to carry out a four-year pilot program in which veterans between the ages of forty and seventy who are enrolled in VA health care but who are not eligible for VA dental benefits, and who have been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, would be provided with outpatient dental services and treatment at no cost to the veterans. The VA would also provide administrative support to dentists providing care for veterans taking part in the pilot program. The purpose of the pilot program would be to study whether there is a correlation between receiving regular dental treatment and reduced complications of chronic disease, which would potentially lead to lower overall costs for the VA.

The ADA also strongly supports the provision of the bill that would create a steering committee appointed by the Secretary of the VA to establish comprehensive ethical and scientific protocols for clinical trials within this pilot program. This committee would have the authority to modify eligibility criteria for the pilot program if necessary to ensure scientific validity.

Thank you for your work to ensure that veterans have access to care that will result in optimal oral health, as well as optimal systemic health. The pilot program authorized in the VET CARE Act would advance this shared goal.

We look forward to working with your office on the passage of this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Tampio at tampioc@ada.org or at 202-789-5178.

Sincerely,

George R. Shepley, D.D.S.
President

Raymond A. Cohlmiya, D.D.S.
Executive Director

GRS:RAC:ct