

June 23, 2023

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

On behalf of the 159,000 members of the American Dental Association (ADA), we are writing to thank you for sponsoring the Rural Health Workforce Pathway Act. The dental profession is facing critical workforce shortages, especially in rural and underserved areas, and your bill would help to address this important issue.

As you know, the Rural Health Workforce Pathway Act would encourage students in rural areas to become health care professionals. The bill directs the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to award grants to consortiums of community organizations that would work to establish, improve, or expand health career exploration programs for rural elementary and secondary school students. These consortiums could include provider organizations like the ADA or a state dental association. The students would receive age-appropriate career guidance, academic counseling, and mentoring, as well as assistance in enrolling in training programs.

The ADA strongly agrees on the importance of encouraging children to become dental professionals, including dentists, hygienists, and assistants. Each of these positions plays a critical role in the dental office and helps to ensure access to care for patients. Students who are exposed to the health care professions from an early age are more likely to choose a health care career, and the guidance and mentoring they would receive under the Rural Health Workforce Pathway Act would help ensure that they succeed. Also, because these students have a higher likelihood of staying and practicing in the community they grew up in or a similar rural area, your legislation will help to alleviate geographical disparities and ensure access to care for rural patients.

Thank you again for your leadership on the Rural Health Workforce Pathway Act. The ADA looks forward to continuing to work with you. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Mortimer at mortimerm@ada.org.

Sincerely,

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

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

GRS:RAC:mm