

April 15, 2025

The Honorable Mia Bonta  
Chair, Assembly Health Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 390  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 350 (Bonta) - SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Bonta:

On behalf of the undersigned groups from The California Partnership for Oral Health, we are writing in strong support of AB 350, legislation aimed at expanding children's coverage and access for topical fluoride varnish in primary care and public health settings for Medi-Cal and commercial plans.

The California Partnership for Oral Health (Partnership) is a coalition dedicated to supporting the California Department of Public Health's State Oral Health Plan. Composed of diverse organizations, the Partnership works to improve oral health for Californians facing challenges in accessing care. We promote healthy behaviors and collaborate to prevent diseases, address unmet oral health needs, eliminate disparities, and achieve oral health equity.

Cavities are the most common chronic yet largely preventable condition among children. Left untreated, cavities can cause pain and infections, impacting children's ability to eat, speak, play, and learn. Research indicates that children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely to miss school due to dental pain and perform worse academically. Additionally, the 2018-19 California Smile Survey revealed that 61% of third graders in California have had tooth decay.

Fluoride, a mineral proven to prevent and repair tooth damage, plays a key role in combating cavities. However, in California, fewer than half of children enrolled in Medi-Cal receive the annual dental visits necessary for fluoride varnish application. Primary care and public health settings, such as schools, provide additional access points for fluoride varnish treatments for Medi-Cal-enrolled children.

The California Oral Health Plan highlights preventive measures to address dental caries, particularly among children, with fluoride varnish identified as an effective tool. AB 350 aligns with this strategy by mandating that health care service plans and insurance policies cover fluoride varnish applications for individuals under 21. This bill will enhance preventive care, especially in underserved communities where access to dental services is limited. By increasing access to fluoride varnish, AB 350 will support the plan's goal to reduce dental caries prevalence and promote oral health equity across the state.

Additionally, we are concerned about recent federal statements that threaten community water fluoridation, a public health intervention recognized by the CDC for its significant impact on reducing cavities since its inception in 1945.

AB 350 will expand coverage and access to fluoride varnish by requiring Medi-Cal and commercial plans to cover fluoride varnish for children under 21 in primary care settings. It also mandates the Department of Health Care Services to create a Medi-Cal policy for fluoride varnish application and reimbursement for personnel working with Medi-Cal-enrolled providers. Expanding access to fluoride varnish will improve oral health outcomes for more children, helping them stay in school and ready to learn.

For these reasons, we fully support AB 350. Thank you for your leadership in promoting the health and well-being of children throughout California.

Sincerely,



Paul Glassman, DDS  
Chair, California Partnership for  
Oral Health



Eileen Espejo  
Co-Chair, California Partnership for Oral Health

CC: Assemblymember Joe Patterson

### **Organizations in Support**

Children Now  
California Dental Association  
Dientes Community Dental Care  
California School-Based Health Alliance  
UCLA School of Dentistry Center for Children's Oral Health  
NICOS Chinese Health Coalition  
County of Sacramento  
Center for Oral Health



Children Now



dientes  
COMMUNITY DENTAL



UCLA Dentistry  
Public Health

UCCOH  
UCLA CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH



Center  
for Oral  
Health

