

Council on Advocacy

Members

Lauren Yap, Temple '19, chair; Anisha Pandya, Boston '20, legislative coordinator for Districts 1-3; Skyler Lagcher, East Carolina '21, legislative coordinator for Districts 4 & 5; Michelle Szewczyk, Detroit Mercy '19, legislative coordinator for districts 6 & 7; Rana Shammass, Texas-Houston '19, legislative coordinator for Districts 8 & 9; Tahsin Anwar, Roseman '19, legislative coordinator for districts 10 & 11; Kai Huang, Alabama '20, district 5 trustee; Austin Tyler, Colorado '20, district 9 trustee; Roopali Kulkarni, Pennsylvania '19, president; Stephanie Follett, director of strategic initiatives, staff liaison; and Keely O'Sullivan Kurtz, manager of advocacy and policy, staff liaison.

Mission

The Council on Advocacy represents the interests of dental students on legislative and regulatory issues that impact the dental profession. The council launches grassroots initiatives to promote action-oriented advocacy in support of dental students and the patients they serve.

Council Business

- **Grassroots initiatives:** the council executed several new initiatives to help students be informed and engaged advocates at the local level.
 - The Advocacy Certificate Program was launched to recognize students for engaging in advocacy. Students earned points throughout the year for participating in advocacy events like chapter lunch and learns and ASDA advocacy webinars. Students meeting the criteria receive a lapel pin and certificate.
 - New Advocacy Month programming was created by the council.
 - Midterm election information about polling places, candidates and dentists running for Congress was included on the Engage website to help students prepare for the election.
 - Council members made short videos to highlight the importance of being a dental voter and on how to navigate the Engage website for election resources.
 - The council facilitated weekly blog and social media posts to showcase dental student issues, advocacy resources and the month's initiatives.
 - In addition to the annual Advocacy 101 and Lobby Day preparation webinars, the council hosted the Combating the Opioid epidemic webinar. Panelists from various dental fields addressed how they are working solve opioid abuse.
- **Legislative and regulatory issues:** the council takes an active role advocating for dental student interests. ASDA's legislative activities and bills supported by the council are below. ASDA will continue to support these issues in 2019.
 - Student Debt
 - Student Loan Refinancing and Recalculation Act allows recent graduates to extend the period of deferment for repaying student loans until completion of a medical or dental residency.

- More than 500 students advocated for the bill at the ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day.
 - Students have sent 74 letters to representatives to co-sponsor the bill since April.
 - There are a total of 28 cosponsors, an increase from last year's 19. The bill is currently in the House Education and Workforce Committee.
 - Student Loan Refinancing Act allows borrowers to refinance their federal student loans multiple times throughout the life of the loans.
 - In addition to lobby for the bill at the ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day, students have sent 182 letters since April to representatives to co-sponsor the bill.
 - ASDA's efforts have contributed to a total of 58 cosponsors. The bill is currently in the House Education and Workforce Committee.
 - Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act
 - At the ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day, attendees urged lawmakers to consider measures that would alleviate the excessive burden of educational debt, allow for refinancing when interest rates change and remove barriers for dental students wanting to pursue careers in public service.
 - ASDA continues its work with the ADA to ensure dental student and new dentist priorities are addressed in this bill.
 - Resident Education Deferred Interest Act will halt interest accrual while loans are in forbearance or deferment for those who qualify for the internship or residency category of either of these payment delay options.
 - In May, ASDA, along with other dental organizations, signed on to a letter thanking Honorable Brian Babin, DDS for introducing this bill.
 - Representative Babin has committed to reintroducing the bill to the 116th Congress.
 - Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Bill aims to keep dental faculty members from paying potentially hefty tax bills on federal loan repayment benefits.
 - Students signed onto a letter with other dental organizations to support this bill.
 - The bill was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Energy and Commerce.
- Barriers to Care
- Action for Dental Health Act allows organizations to qualify for oral health grants administered by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 - Students lobbied for this bill on Capitol Hill during the ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day.
 - Since April, students have sent 642 letters to representatives to cosponsor the bill.
 - Due in part to ASDA's efforts, the bill was signed into law.

- Opioids
 - SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act was signed into law and authorizes research, grants and other programs to combat the opioid crisis.
 - During the ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day, students advocated for elements they believe are important to include in comprehensive bipartisan legislation. Many of the principles ASDA and the ADA advocated for during ADA Dentist and Student Lobby Day are included in the law.
 - ASDA's efforts contributed to the passage of this bill into law on Oct. 24.