

## **Council on Advocacy 2024-25 Annual Report**

### **Members**

Chair Bree Zhang, Columbia '27; Districts 1-3 Legislative Coordinator Natalie Ingram, Tufts '26; Districts 4&5 Legislative Coordinator Megan Davis, Louisiana State '26; Districts 6&7 Legislative Coordinator Jonathan Koby, Marquette '25; Districts 8&9 Legislative Coordinator Mira Lavalley, Texas-San Antonio '25; Districts 10&11 Legislative Coordinator Kendall Block, Utah '25; District 1 Trustee Jake Cantrell, Harvard '25; District 7 Trustee Darius Warner, Indiana '25; Vice President Tareina Rogers, Tufts '25; Staff Liaison Stephanie Follett; Staff Liaison Libbey Detcher

### **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**

- Connections with Legislative Liaisons
  - Throughout the year, council members were responsible for working with local legislative liaisons in their assigned grouping of districts. Council members held orientation calls, sent emails, and communicated with leaders to share information, answer questions, and serve as a resource.
  - The council continued utilizing the Advocacy Leaders GroupMe as a platform for advocacy leaders to share ideas and connect asynchronously.
  - **\*New\*** Legislative coordinators scheduled quarterly virtual meetings with chapter legislative liaisons in their regions, named "Policy Huddles," to share national advocacy updates and facilitate a space for conversations about local advocacy initiatives.
  - **\*New\*** The council created a Google Drive folder for Legislative Liaisons to access PowerPoint templates for events, advocacy event ideas, ASDA Advocacy and Molar Bear graphics, advocacy guides, and more.
- Legislative Grassroots Network (LGN) Event Grant
  - Five chapters were awarded \$500 grants out of 20 applicants to host advocacy events.
  - As these chapters hosted and reported on their events, they were featured in Advocacy Briefs.

#### **National Initiatives**

- Advocacy Month
  - Theme: "Win the Race: Sprinting Towards a Better Future" focused making strides in advocating for issues impacting dental students and the patients they serve, with a particular emphasis on voter mobilization.
  - 48 ASDA chapters signed up to pick up the Molar Bear at NLC 2024. The physical Molar Bear retired with chapters this year to reduce the costs and time spent on logistics of transporting the bears.
  - Advocacy Month text challenges. Every week, we texted out different advocacy challenges for a chance to win a prize.

- Leading up to Advocacy Month and the 2024 general election, the council launched the “Donut” Forget to Vote initiative, providing resources for chapters to host voter registration drives and encouraging members to fill out a short survey after registering to vote.
  - The top 3 schools with the highest participation percentage were awarded gift cards. Lincoln Memorial recorded an impressive 100% of chapter member participation.
  - Over 1,400 students nationwide recorded being registered voters for the 2024 general election.
- Barriers to Care Resources
  - **\*New\*** The council created informational materials highlighting different barriers to care that were shared on social media.
- Advocacy Certificate Program
  - The Advocacy Certificate Program encourages and rewards members for getting involved with advocacy.
  - Participants who earn 8 or more points are emailed a PDF certificate and letter from the ASDA president.
  - About 225 points have been submitted in this year’s program, a significant decrease from last year’s participation. Nearly all points were submitted between the months of October through December.
- District Advocacy Scholarship Proposal
  - The council is investigating creating a district advocacy scholarship for individuals to receive funding to attend non-ASDA advocacy events, such as ADA Lobby Day, state lobby days, and other advocacy-related events and conferences.

### **Legislative and Regulatory Issues**

- The council determined ASDA’s support to sign onto 4 coalition letters regarding:
  - Support for the Dental Faculty Loan Repayment Program
  - Support for tax policies that directly benefit small business dental practices, dentists, and dental students
  - Concerns with restructuring plans for the National Institutes of Health
  - Concerns with the ruling in *Food & Water Watch v. EPA*, which ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to provide stricter regulations for community water fluoridation
- In addition, the council determined following bills to be displayed on ASDA Action noting ASDA’s support or monitoring status:
  - H.R. 1125 / S. 469 STUDENT Act
  - H.R. 1371 Student Loan Disclosure Transparency Act of 2023
  - H.R. 1731 LOAN Act
  - H.R. 1842 / S. 1004 Student Loan Tax Elimination Act
  - H.R. 4139 Student Loan Refinancing Act
  - H.R. 6077 POST GRAD Act
  - H.R. 1202 / S. 704 REDI Act-Deferring Student Loan Interest for Residents
  - S. 862 Restoring America’s Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act
  - S. 2172 Dental Loan Repayment Assistance Act of 2023
  - H.R. 590 / S. 109 Ensuring Kids Have Access to Medically Necessary Dental Care Act
  - H.R. 994 / S. 403 Oral Health Literacy and Awareness Act of 2023
  - H.R. 2410 VET CARE Act of 2023

- H.R. 2413 Dental Care for Veterans Act
- H.R. 2559 Strengthening Community Care Act of 2023
- H.R. 3380 HEADs UP Act of 2023
- H.R. 3701 Foster Youth Dental Act of 2023
- H.R. 3843 Action for Dental Health Act of 2023
- H.R. 1342 / S. 570 Medicaid Dental Benefit Act of 2023
- H.R. 2569 DOC Act
- S. 2402 Gateway to Careers Act of 2023
- H.R. 1385 DOC Access Act of 2023
- H.R. 1422 SMILED Act
- H.R. 1671 Increasing Access to Dental Insurance Act
- S. 1424 A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to improve health care coverage under vision and dental plans, and for other purposes
- H.R. 3633 PREVENT HPV Cancers Act of 2023