

Council on Advocacy 2025-26 Annual Report

Members

Chair Miriam Villa, Midwestern AZ '27; Districts 1-3 Legislative Coordinator Constance Newell, New England '28; Districts 4&5 Legislative Coordinator Josh Bozeman, East Carolina '27; Districts 6&7 Legislative Coordinator Jaclyn Montag, West Virginia '26; Districts 8-10 Legislative Coordinator Bill Keute, Minnesota '26; Districts 11-13 Legislative Coordinator Sarah Donahue, Los Angeles '27; District 8 Trustee Emily Bone, Southern Illinois '27; District 13 Trustee Honesty Boone, Los Angeles '27; Vice President Tyler Jenness, Iowa '26; Staff Liaison Stephanie Follett; and 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.
 - 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.
 - 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
 - Six chapters were awarded \$500 grants out of 29 applicants to host advocacy events.
 - As these chapters hosted and reported on their events, they were featured in Advocacy Briefs.
- Resources for Legislative Liaisons
 - Council members created virtual resources on Fluoride FAQs and changes to federal student loans passed in the One Big Beautiful Bill.

National Initiatives

- Advocacy Month
 - Theme: "Closing the Gap: Ensuring Oral Health Care for All Communities" focused on empowering dental students to advocate for continued and expanded access to oral healthcare.
 - The council launched the Advocacy Certificate Program Chapter Challenge
 - A total of 738 points were recorded by 43 chapters. The top chapter submitted 117 points.

- Chapters who recorded the most points in 5 regional and 1 new chapter category were awarded funding towards their next advocacy event.
 - The council hosted a webinar, “FQHCs: Benefitting You and the Public” to highlight career opportunities in public health dentistry.
 - Advocacy included two social media initiatives: an Instagram story quiz to test members’ knowledge of dental student debt and a challenge for ASDA members to share how they are “Closing the Gap” in their communities.
- Resolutions Submitted to the 2026 House of Delegates
 - The Council on Advocacy was referred Resolution 402-2025 Addressing Climate Change and Sustainability in Dentistry through Dental Education and Practice. It proposed an amendment to the current B-17 Sustainability in Curricula policy and proposed a new policy on the role of dentistry in disaster relief efforts.
 - In light of recent changes to federal student loans, the council reviewed ASDA’s current policies relating to dental student debt. It submitted four resolutions to the 2026 House of Delegates:
 - Amending F-1 Tuition Increase Control
 - Amending F-2 Financial Aid Repayment
 - Rescinding F-3 Health Education Assistance Programs
 - Creating of a new policy on Access to Student Loans

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. The program was also used to tally scores for the Advocacy Month Chapter Challenge.
- As of December 11, 751 points have been submitted in this year’s program, a significant increase from last year’s participation.
 - Points were submitted by 469 individuals from 43 chapters.

Legislative and Regulatory Issues

- The council determined ASDA’s support to sign onto 13 coalition letters regarding:
 - Supporting the DOC Access Act
 - Advocating for the Chief Dental Officer role in CMS (March & November)
 - Supporting the Dental Loan Repayment Assistance Act for dental faculty
 - Standing behind water fluoridation
 - Opposing cuts to oral health programs in HHS
 - Thanking legislators for sponsoring ELSA in Congress
 - Advocating for PTET deductions for small dental practices
 - Urging the DOJ to maintain water fluoridation levels for overseas military bases
 - Opposing student loan borrowing limits in the OBBB
 - Supporting the Protect Our TEETH Act
 - Advocating for access to federal student loans for dental students
 - Opposing additional fees for H-1B work visas
- The council launched four ASDA Action campaigns on issues affecting dental students.
 - Members sent 1,680 letters to Congress opposing changes to federal student loans in the One Big Beautiful Bill.

- Members sent 216 letters to support the REDI Act.
- Members sent 177 letters to support the Protect Our TEETH Act.
- Members sent 224 letters to support the Ensuring Lasting Smiles (ELSA) Act in conjunction with AOD Week.
- In addition, the council determined following bills to be displayed on ASDA Action noting ASDA's support or monitoring status:
 - H.R. 593: Strengthening Pathways to Health Professions Act
 - H.R. 1758/S. 1080: Dental Loan Repayment Assistance Act of 2025
 - H.R. 2028/ S. 942: REDI Act
 - H.R. 3165: Student Loan Tax Elimination Act
 - H.R. 3711/S. 1948: POST GRAD Act
 - H.R. 5843: Shutdown Student Loans for Feds Act
 - H.R. 210: Dental Care for Veterans Act
 - H.R. 1397/ S. 1164: Increasing Access to Dental Insurance Act
 - H.R. 3277/S. 1677: Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act
 - H.R. 3409: HEADs UP Act of 2025
 - S. 2048 Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act of 2025
 - H.R. 1521: DOC Access Act of 2025
 - H.R. 4262: To reauthorize programs related to health professions education, and for other purposes.
 - H.R. 4556: Protect Our TEETH Act
 - S. 2954 Health Care Workforce Expansion Act