



Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA)

S. 754/H.R. 1916

The American Dental Association (ADA) and the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) strongly support S. 754/H.R. 1916, the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), and urge you to co-sponsor this important bipartisan bill. By doing so, you can have a positive impact on Americans, including your constituents, who suffer from a congenital anomaly.

ELSA was introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) and Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Drew Ferguson (R-GA).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies birth defects as “common, costly, and critical” and says that they affect 1 in 33 newborns born in the United States each year. While these abnormalities can appear cosmetic, they impair the patient’s physical functioning. Craniofacial anomalies like cleft lip and palate or hypodontia (the absence of teeth) interfere with a person’s ability to breathe, speak, and/or eat in a normal manner. Specialized surgery is often needed to correct these anomalies. These procedures are reconstructive in nature and are performed to correct abnormal structures of the body.

Despite this, many insurance companies consider these services to be cosmetic, and while they may cover the preliminary surgeries, will delay or deny follow-up or corrective procedures, including dental work related to the anomaly. This can further delay a child’s developmental milestones.

ELSA would require all private group and individual health plans to cover medically necessary services resulting from a congenital anomaly or birth defect. This would include inpatient and outpatient care and reconstructive services and procedures, as well as adjunctive dental, orthodontic, or prosthodontic support. The bill specifically exempts cosmetic surgery.

As dentists and dental students, we ask you to help patients with craniofacial anomalies by co-sponsoring ELSA, S. 754/H.R. 1916.