



March 25, 2024

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

**Re: AB 2701 (Villapudua) – Medi-Cal Second Adult Cleaning and Examination – SPONSOR
As Introduced, February 14, 2024**

Dear Chair Bonta:

The California Dental Association, representing 27,000 member-dentists throughout the state, is proud to sponsor AB 2701 (Villapudua), which would expand existing Medi-Cal Dental benefits to include a second adult exam and cleaning after the age of 21.

Recent investments in the Medi-Cal Dental program including restoration of Medi-Cal dental benefits, improved reimbursement rates through Proposition 56 and the children’s focused incentives under CalAIM, as well as significant programmatic changes, have led to meaningful and sustained results in the Medi-Cal Dental Program. Despite these investments, there continues to be holes in the Medi-Cal dental benefit, including that beneficiaries over the age of 21 are only permitted one cleaning and exam a year. This is contradictory to the standard of care, which is a minimum of two exams and cleanings a year, or every six months, to ensure maximum preventive care against dental diseases.

Studies have shown that preventive dental care lowers dental costs overall. A 2022 study from the *Journal of Health and Services Research* found that preventive dental visits in Medicaid enrolled adults were associated with fewer subsequent non-preventive visits and costs. ¹ The *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* also conducted a study in which it found an inverse relationship between the number of years of prevention and the average cost of dental services for adults enrolled in Medicaid. ² Lower dental costs also were found to extend to emergency room departments, which saw reduced visits for non-traumatic dental conditions, as well as fewer dental surgeries and dental related opioid prescriptions.³

¹ [Does preventive dental care reduce nonpreventive dental visits and expenditures among Medicaid-enrolled adults? - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

² [The impact of underutilization of preventive dental care by adult Medicaid participants - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

³ [Emergency Departments Are No Place for Dental Care | CareQuest Institute for Oral Health](#)

In addition to lowering overall costs, increasing the frequency of available preventive visits also furthers health equity and increases the overall health of Californians. In a 2020 UCLA study, adults who had Medi-Cal coverage were more than twice as likely to have poor oral health than adults with private insurance (42% vs. 16%). When broken down by race/ethnicity, the same study showed that only 21% of White adult Californians had poor oral health, compared to 30% of Black Californians and 34% of Latinx Californians.⁴ While the most obvious effects of poor oral health include cavities, gum disease and tooth loss – which can result in infection and poor nutrition – recent studies have also tied poor oral health to a number of common diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.⁵ In recognition of the role of preventive services in creating good oral health, 28 other states already cover at least two dental cleanings per year in their Medicaid programs.⁶

For these reasons, **CDA is proud to sponsor AB 2701 (Villapudua) and respectfully requests an AYE vote** in the Assembly Health Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about our position, please contact Jessica Moran at Jessica.Moran@cda.org.

Sincerely,



Jessica Moran, MPH
Legislative Advocate

Cc: Members and staff, Assembly Committee on Health
Assemblymember Carlos Villapudua

⁴ [Income disparities widen the gap in oral health of California adults - Digital Collections - National Library of Medicine \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁵ [Oral health: A window to your overall health - Mayo Clinic](#)

⁶ [Adult Dental Medicaid Coverage Checker | CareQuest Institute](#)