

February 28, 2019

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst
111 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Denver Riggleman
1022 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA), S. 560/H.R. 1379

Dear Senators Baldwin and Ernst and Representatives Peterson and Riggleman:

The undersigned organizations write to express our support for S. 560/H.R. 1379, the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA). This bipartisan legislation will have a direct impact on patients and will eliminate the existing burdens that prevent access to necessary diagnosis and treatment for those with congenital anomalies.

We appreciate your leadership in recognizing the importance of ensuring access to the care and services necessary to improve or restore body function or approximate a normal appearance due to a congenital anomaly, such as cleft lip and palate, skeletal and maxillofacial abnormalities, facial paralysis, microtia, hypodontia, and craniosynostosis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies birth defects as “common, costly, and critical” and reports that one in 33 newborns in the United States suffers from a congenital anomaly. Craniofacial anomalies, for example, can restrict a patient’s ability to breathe, eat, and speak in a normal manner. Therefore, highly personalized surgery to repair an anomaly helps the patient grow and function normally. Early intervention by a team of specialists, including plastic surgeons, oral and maxillofacial surgeons, pediatric dentists, orthodontists, dermatologists and speech therapists, is necessary to assess and oversee the patient’s treatment and development, sometimes over the course of several years.

While many private health insurance companies cover the preliminary procedures, they routinely deny or delay follow-up or corrective procedures claiming that they are cosmetic in nature—which fails to recognize the medical conditions of these patients. Delays in medically necessary care can negatively impact a child’s developmental milestones and coverage denials of a child’s reconstructive surgery, can result in families turning to Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or other safety net programs for coverage. That’s why we support the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act, which would require all private group and individual health plans to cover medically necessary services that repair or restore a patient’s anomaly – ensuring patients access to life-saving treatments.

Thank you again for your support and leadership on this important issue. As patients, families and health professionals, we are committed to working with you toward passage of the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthodontists
American Association of Women Dentists
American College of Surgeons
American Dental Association
American Society of Dental Anesthesiologists
American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
CCD Smiles
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Derma Care Access Network
EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases
FACES: The National Craniofacial Association
Foundation for Ichthyosis and Related Skin Types, Inc.
Genetic Alliance
International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
March of Dimes
Moebius Syndrome Foundation
National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias
National Organization for Rare Disorders
Pathways for Rare and Orphan Studies
Project Accessible Oral Health
Rare and Undiagnosed Network
SunnyStrong
The APS Type 1 Foundation
The Marfan Foundation
The Sturge-Weber Foundation