

# What Can Congress Do?



## Action 1

**Oppose Medicaid cuts that would jeopardize access to dental care for 72 million people who rely on the program.**

- Medicaid is a vital source of dental coverage for children, people with disabilities, and low-income adults and seniors — improving health outcomes, reducing medical debt, and boosting economic opportunity and job performance.
- Cuts to Medicaid funding would force states to eliminate adult dental benefits, leading to increased emergency room use, reduced services or closures of safety net dental providers, and higher system-wide health care costs.



## Action 2

**Improve access to dental care for veterans who get medical care through the VA.**

- The majority of veterans do not qualify for VA dental benefits, and those who do often face provider shortages, geographic barriers, and high out-of-pocket costs — placing them at greater risk for chronic conditions and financial strain.
- Nearly 8 million veterans report fair or poor oral health, with rural and disabled veterans disproportionately affected due to limited provider access and higher care costs.<sup>1</sup>



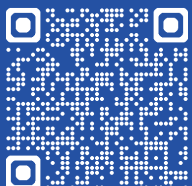
## Action 3

**Support the HEADs UP Act, which would designate people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) as a Medically Underserved Population (MUP) and increase their access to oral health care.**

- Individuals with I/DD face worse oral health outcomes — reporting less frequent dental visits and higher rates of discrimination and emergency dental care use than those without disabilities.<sup>2</sup>
- Designating the I/DD population as a Medically Underserved Population would expand access to tailored services through health centers, enhance provider training and support, and unlock targeted federal funding to address long-standing access gaps — including in oral health care.

1. The American Institute of Dental Public Health and CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, *Veteran Oral Health: Expanding Access and Equity*, Boston, MA: December 2021, DOI: 10.35565/CQI.2021.2041

2. CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, *Family Affair: A Snapshot of Oral Health Disparities and Challenges in Individuals in Households Experiencing Disability*, Boston, MA: October 2022.



**For questions, please contact**

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