



June 1, 2017

Assemblyman Phil Ting
Chairman of the Assembly Budget Committee and
Chair of the Conference Committee on the Budget
State Capitol, Suite 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Holly Mitchell
Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and
Chair of the Conference Committee on the Budget
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblyman Ting and Senator Mitchell,


As CEO and Dental Director of the nonprofit [Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center in San Diego](#) and Chief Strategy Officer and Executive Vice President of [West Health](#), we are writing to urge you to support the oral healthcare needs of seniors. It is a key reason why California voters passed Prop. 56 last year: to invest new tobacco tax revenues into expanding patient access to essential healthcare services provided by community clinics, dentists and physicians.


At the Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center, located in downtown San Diego, we see firsthand each day, the barriers that prevent many seniors from receiving dental care. The acute oral health needs of California's low-income seniors -- and those that rely on Denti-Cal -- are a silent epidemic that endangers the overall health of millions of seniors.

The California State Auditor and the Little Hoover Commission [reports](#) document the state's very low Denti-Cal provider reimbursement rates discourage dentists from serving Medi-Cal patients and the federally qualified health centers (FQHC) don't have enough capacity to serve the need. If improvements in access, affordability, education and awareness of oral healthcare do not occur, oral diseases and related health issues will become an increasingly prevalent and costly public health issue for our aging population.

As you finalize your budget proposal, we urge you to remember the oral healthcare needs of seniors who desperately need access to affordable, high-quality oral healthcare in order to live healthy, productive lives.

Sincerely,


Karen Becerra, D.D.S, M.P.H.
CEO and Dental Director
Gary and Mary West Senior Dental Center


Timothy A. Lash, M.B.A.
Chief Strategy Officer & EVP, West Health
President, West Health Policy Center