



COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

Letter to the Editor

Virginia Politics

A New Way to Fulfill the Single Biggest Need of Poor Patients: Teeth

Dear editor,

Thank you for publishing the article about efforts to provide low-income people with much needed dental care on July 24. As an anti-poverty advocate, I was excited to see the *Washington Post* report on the benefits of dental care—an issue that is often overlooked in media coverage of health care. Oral health care is essential to overall health: When oral health is compromised, it can undermine physical and mental health—and even economic security.

We need to increase access to dental care. This article tells the story of two Virginia farmers who can't afford dental care but were able to receive it when a charitable dental group visited their town. Many people, however, aren't so fortunate—and never get the care they need. We can do more to provide all people with dental health care services. We can prevent oral conditions, which can be serious and expensive to treat—and undermine overall health—and in so doing, avoid unnecessary costs to individuals and to our society.

Address the letter to the generic “editor”

Letters to the editor typically respond to a specific story that appeared in the news outlet. Be sure to link to the story.

Letters to the editor can be both positive or negative in sentiment.

Be sure to connect oral health to overall health. FrameWorks' research shows that the public doesn't make this distinction or understand the link between oral health and physical and mental health or economic security.

Use the value of **Responsible Management** to build the argument about avoidable costs in support of dental health care. FrameWorks research found that appealing to this value boosted the public's sense of collective responsibility to address poor oral health outcomes and led to increases in people's understanding of how systemic factors affect oral health.

One way to do that is to support legislation that would require Medicaid, the federal insurance program for the poor, to provide dental care to adults. Under current law, Medicaid programs are required to provide dental coverage to children and youth—but not to adults. As a result, dental benefits for adults vary widely by state. We can change that. It's time.

[Name]

[Name] is [title] at [organization]

[contact information]

End the story with a solution. This letter to the editor takes the opportunity to make a clear call to action to support target legislation that would increase access to oral health coverage.

Letters to the editor are typically 150 – 250 words and often must follow strict word limits. Short letters may not allow you to tell the full “core story,” so use shorter opportunities to focus on its component parts. Log on to your target publication to find out more about submission guidelines.

Be sure to include a tagline that identifies you and your organization, as well as your contact information in case the editor needs more information from you