



CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

February 10, 2006

To: Members, California State Assembly
From: Santos Cortez, DDS, President, California Society of Pediatric Dentistry
Re: SB 912 (Perata, Ducheny, Aanestad and Runner)
Position: Support

The California Society of Pediatric Dentistry strongly supports the passage of SB 912, which is urgently needed to maintain the safety net of qualified providers who care for the oral health needs of California's most vulnerable children. SB 912 would restore the 5% reduction in Medi-Cal payments, including those for essential dental services, that threaten to erode an already precariously thin provider base.

The California Society of Pediatric Dentistry is the professional organization representing California's nearly 600 pediatric dental care specialists in teaching, research and clinical practice. Our mission is to advocate optimal oral health and general welfare of infants, children, adolescents and persons with special needs. We are the state component of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

The 2000 Surgeon General's report carried the message that dental disease (tooth decay) is the most chronic and pervasive disease of childhood --- five times as common as asthma --- and that children in low-income households suffer twice as much from untreated decay as their more affluent peers. In fact, that same report listed low Medicaid reimbursement rates that often are less than what it costs dentists to provide care as one of the chief barriers to improving this deplorable situation. The recently-released findings of the *2005 California Oral Health Assessment* of children in kindergarten and third grade found that almost three out of four children in low-income households have experienced dental decay. One out of three of these children is sitting now in the classroom with unmet treatment needs, which, without care, will progress to needless pain, suffering, difficulty with eating, lost school days and loss of self-esteem.

Eroding the current provider base by reducing an already intolerable reimbursement level will not serve the children of California well. Our children deserve better.

WE URGE YOUR "AYE" VOTE ON SB 912