Associations want chief dental officer role to have teeth

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), the American Association for Dental Research (AADR), the American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD) and the Special Care Dentistry Association (SCDA) in April urged U.S. legislators to restore the position of chief dental officer with executive-level authority and resources to oversee the dental programs and oral health initiatives of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Leaders from the four organizations convened on Capitol Hill to advocate that good oral health is an essential public health need, and they argued that the HRSA’s current staffing structure fails to adequately support individuals across the country.

“HRSA needs the strong voice of a dentist to inform and lead our country’s oral health agenda,” said AGD President W. Mark Donald, DDS, MAGD. “Without this leader, the health of more than 3 million people served through HRSA programs, including many of the most vulnerable and underserved, is being left at risk, managed by administrators without formal training in oral health and dentistry. A dentist in the chief dental officer role would be able to draw from his or her practice expertise and clinical knowledge to best identify our country’s oral health challenges, develop solutions in response and ensure that each dollar spent is done so in a way that will result in better oral health outcomes.”

The chief dental officer position was established in 2008, however, the role has never been granted a separate budget or line-item authority as has been done with similar appointments in agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Indian Health Services or the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

Donald was joined by SCDA Vice President Jeffrey Hicks, DDS; AAPHD Executive Director Julie Frantsve-Hawley, RDH, PhD; and AADR Director of Governmental Affairs Carolyn Mullen.

The AGD (www.agd.org) is a professional association of 40,000 general dentists dedicated to providing quality dental care and oral health education to the public. Founded in 1952, the AGD is the second-largest dental association in the U.S., and it is the only association that exclusively serves the needs and represents the interests of general dentists.

(Source: AGD)