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ACR-10 Children's Dental Health Month. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 10

CHAPTER 16

Relative to Children's Dental Health Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 27, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 10, Weber. Children's Dental Health Month.

This measure would recognize and declare the month of February 2023 as Children's Dental Health Month.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, In California, tooth decay remains a significant public health problem. By the third grade, 6 in 10 children (61 percent) have experienced tooth decay and one in five children (22 percent) have untreated tooth decay; and

WHEREAS, Tooth decay disparities related to race or ethnicity, or both, and socioeconomic status continue to exist in California and undermine health equity. Among Latinx children, 72 percent have experienced some form of tooth decay. African American children experience untreated tooth decay at the highest levels at 25.8 percent, or one in four children. Among socioeconomic disadvantaged children, 72.3 percent experience tooth decay and 26 percent experience untreated tooth decay; and

WHEREAS, Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. California children miss 874,000 days of school each year due to dental problems; and

WHEREAS, Tooth decay is the number one chronic infectious disease affecting children in the United States, although it is largely preventable. Early dental visits help prevent cavities and tooth decay. Basic preventive treatments like fluoride varnish, dental sealants, and community water fluoridation can all help prevent cavities in primary (baby) teeth. Early infant dental visits are key to long-term oral health as studies have shown that delaying dental care to even two or three years of age can have a negative impact on a child's oral health. Up to 40 percent of parents and caregivers in one survey postponed their child's first visit until after 2.6 years of age; and

WHEREAS, California has made significant investments in recent years to improve the oral health infrastructure in the state, including efforts to increase preventive dental services and improve dental health for children enrolled in Medi-Cal. These recent improvements have resulted in a 25-percent increase (2,400 providers) in Medi-Cal dental program providers in the last five years, a rate that is increasing each year. This increase in the number of providers has provided an additional 115,000 annual dental visits and nearly 100,000 additional preventive services in the Medi-Cal dental program statewide from 2017–19; and

WHEREAS, Despite this expanded access, barriers to oral health care still exist; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 negatively impacted and delayed care for many Californians, exacerbating access-to-care issues for children's oral health. In fact, less than one-half of all children enrolled by Medi-Cal visited a dentist last year; and

WHEREAS, Increased awareness of the importance of children's oral health will continue to further educational goals and efforts to prevent childhood oral health diseases; and

WHEREAS, Children's Dental Health Month is an important nationwide tool for raising awareness about the importance of childhood oral health and the role it plays in children's overall health among California's leaders, policy makers, and the public about the impact of poor oral health on children; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby recognizes and declares February 2023 as Children's Dental Health Month in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature is committed to supporting efforts to raise awareness about the importance of oral health and preventing oral health diseases in children; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.