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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY OF 2024, TO BE "CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH"  
IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Kislak, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale,  
McNamara, Slater, Diaz, Corvese, Tanzi, and Fenton-Fung

Date Introduced: February 14, 2024

Referred To: House read and passed

1           WHEREAS, The recognition of February as Children's Dental Health Month provides a  
2 month-long statewide dental health observance bringing together thousands of dedicated  
3 professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to  
4 children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others; and

5           WHEREAS, Children's teeth are meant to last a lifetime, and a healthy smile is important  
6 to a child's self-esteem. With proper care, a balanced diet and regular dental visits, their teeth can  
7 remain healthy and strong. Oral health is integral to overall health; and

8           WHEREAS, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tooth  
9 decay, also known as cavities, is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States  
10 and the leading cause of missed school among children. On average, 34 million school hours and  
11 two million days are lost each year because of unplanned or emergency dental care; and

12           WHEREAS, Roughly nine million children, ages six to twelve, miss school because of an  
13 oral health issue. Sadly, kids with poor oral health are three times more likely to miss school and  
14 two times more likely to academically perform poorly; and

15           WHEREAS, Developing good habits at an early age and scheduling regular dental visits  
16 helps children to get a good start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. Great oral health leads  
17 to more time in the classroom and better overall performance in school; and

18           WHEREAS, The average age of a dentist in Rhode Island is 62. Rhode Island must both  
19 train and invest in the entire dental team - dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental

1 office managers – along with health and human services leaders interested in oral health, to bring  
2 oral care to our residents; and

3 WHEREAS, Rhode Island has a “dentist to population ratio” that is the lowest of all the  
4 New England states and lower than the national average which impacts access and challenges  
5 exist in finding hygienists for dental offices. Promoting a career in dentistry for Rhode Islanders  
6 is critical and that programs that include dental careers such as CCRI, the new dental assisting  
7 training program at East Providence High School, and having exposure at a dental table at the  
8 recent Junior Achievement event are vital for the State; and

9 WHEREAS, Rhode Island should continue to explore innovative ways to bolster the  
10 dental workforce for the sake of the dental health of young and old; now, therefore be it

11 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby  
12 urges all citizens and community organizations to observe February as National Children's Dental  
13 Health Month; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That this House hereby proclaims February of 2024, to be “Children's  
15 Dental Health Month” in the State of Rhode Island; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
17 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Executive Director, Aaron Guckian, the Rhode  
18 Island Dental Association, Dr. Samuel Zwetchkenbaum, State Dental Director, Rhode Island  
19 Department of Health, Marie Jones Bridges, Director at RI Dental Hygienist Association, and Dr.  
20 Fred Hartman, President of the RI Dental Association.

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