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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

S E N A T E R E S O L U T I O N

RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2026, AS "NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH" IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senators DiPalma, Raptakis, Acosta, DiMario, Famiglietti, Ujifusa, Appollonio, Urso, Tikoian, and Thompson

Date Introduced: February 10, 2026

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, Oral health is an essential component of overall health and well-being, and
2 establishing healthy habits early in life is critical to lifelong wellness; and

3 WHEREAS, Childhood dental caries (cavities) remains the most prevalent chronic - but
4 preventable - disease among children in the United States; and

5 WHEREAS, Despite recommendations from the American Dental Association (ADA),
6 and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), for a first dental visit by age one, nearly 74
7 percent of children in the United States have not had a dental visit before their first birthday; and

8 WHEREAS, Collaboration between primary care providers and dental professionals is
9 vital to reducing emergency room visits for dental-related conditions and preventing the need for
10 extensive restorative care under general anesthesia for children as young as three; and

11 WHEREAS, Barriers to oral health equity persist, limiting access to preventive services
12 such as cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, and restorative care, and educational materials in
13 multiple languages are essential to improving oral health literacy for all families; and

14 WHEREAS, At a time when mental health is a priority, oral health education emphasizes
15 the role of oral health in self-esteem and overall well-being; and issues such as tooth decay, bad
16 breath, missing teeth, or malalignment can significantly impact an individual's confidence and
17 mental health, reinforcing the importance of comprehensive care; and

18 WHEREAS, The dental professional workforce shortage is at a critical level, and a
19 strategic effort must be implemented to expose individuals to diverse career opportunities beyond

1 traditional paths, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive oral health workforce for the future; and

2 WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island has implemented measures to increase access to
3 care, including Public Health Dental Hygienists (PHDH), Community Health Workers (CHW),
4 increased Medicaid reimbursements, and expanded use of mobile dental vans and school-based
5 clinics through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs); and

6 WHEREAS, Continued collaboration within communities to promote oral health literacy
7 and equitable access to care is necessary to ensure all children can maintain healthy habits for a
8 lifetime; now, therefore be it

9 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby recognizes February
10 of 2026 as "National Children's Dental Health Month" and encourages all residents to support
11 efforts that promote oral health education, preventive care, and healthy habits for every child; and
12 be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
14 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Dental Association.

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