

2005 AAPHD Public Service Award: Senator Susan Collins

Presented by Candace M. Jones, RDH, MPH

The AAPHD Public Service Award is presented to an individual in recognition of substantial contributions to affect public policies or other activities related to improving the oral health of the public. This year's recipient is Senator Susan Collins of Maine. Senator Collins has been a strong leader and vocal supporter for improving access to oral health care for vulnerable Americans since her election to the United States Senate in 1996. She is the co-author of two major pieces of legislation on oral health, one of which was signed into law in 2002. She actively cosponsors any dental bills that move through Congress.

Her understanding and compassion for the challenge of delivering oral health care to underserved populations, particularly in rural areas, is not only seen in her leadership in the Senate but as she travels the state of Maine and in her communication with the White House.

In 2002, the Health Care Safety Net Amendments included provisions authored by Senators Collins and Feingold in the Dental Health Improvement Act. This initiative is intended to improve access to oral health care by strengthening the dental workforce in our nation's rural and underserved communities. The legislation authorizes \$50 million through FY 2006 for grants to states to help them develop innovative dental workforce development programs



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specific to their individual needs.

Senator Collins did not allow this victory to leave her complacent. She has worked diligently to get these programs adequately funded, and in November wrote a letter to the Administration urging them to include at least \$10 million for this program in their FY 2006 budget request.

In addition to this important initiative, Senator Collins joined forces with Senator Daschle in the 108th Congress to introduce the Dental Health Provider Shortage Act. This Act complements the previously-mentioned bill by further strengthening programs that will shore up the dental infrastructure for children, particularly those who live in rural areas and who have limited or no access to den-

tal services. This bill specifically provides:

- Incentives for dentists and hygienists to practice in underserved areas and retention bonuses for dental experts to work with the Indian Health Service;
- Grants to community health centers to start or expand dental programs and to establish residency training programs;
- Grants to state agencies to simplify Medicaid enrollment and payment processes and to encourage provider participation;
- Incentives to increase the number of dentists and dental hygienists through the National Health Service Corps and other loan repayment programs and scholarship programs for dentist faculty.

The dental community and in particular, the public health dental community is very fortunate to have a friend and advocate in Senator Collins. Her commitment to these issues is steadfast and has shown no bounds.

Senator Collins was not able to be with us today due to commitment in Maine, but she will be recognized with AAPHD's Public Service Award in June in Washington, DC. Please join me in a round of applause for Senator Collins.



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