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I would like to thank the chair and committee members for the opportunity today to speak in favor of Senate Bill 237.

I received my MPH from John's Hopkins School of Public Health and for more than 20 years, I have been a pediatric dental Attending at Children's National Hospital where I have seen first-hand the impact untreated dental decay on children and their families. Oral infections, avoidable hospital admissions, and days lost for school all from a preventable disease.

One of the most important components of this bill is the provision for early dental screening. Early preventive dental visits not only save dollars, they also lead to better health outcomes. As a trustee for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and my current position on the board of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry I have advocated for the "Age One" dental visit, which is modeled after the American Academy of Pediatrics' medical home concept. All parents deserve time spent one on one with an oral health care professional who knows their child and their families' disease risk patterns who can partner with them, so parents gain the self-efficacy they need to raise health children.

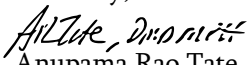
Behavior change is hard, it is always better to prevent a problem rather than treat it. These early dental visits allow for relationships to grow and for families to build trust with their oral health care providers through guided conversations about preventive treatment options such as dental hygiene, fluoride therapy and dietary counseling.

We know that young children with dental decay in their baby teeth are three times more likely to develop decay in their permanent teeth¹, early and effective prevention of dental cavities in children has the potential to reduce suffering and expense.

I love seeing young children in our clinic it is some of the most hopeful and joyful work I do. Parents are so engaged and full of questions. We want children to grown up pain free, in environments where oral health is valued, and families are armed with knowledge and skills to raise a cavity-free child.

I ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 237.

Sincerely,


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1. Li Y, Wang W. Predicting caries in permanent teeth from caries in primary teeth: an eight-year cohort study. J Dent Res 2002;81(8):561-6.

