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October 29, 2008

Mr. Mark Schoenbaum  
Office of Rural Health and Primary Care  
Minnesota Department of Health

Re: Oral Health Practitioner Work Group Discussions

Dear Mr. Schoenbaum,

It is my understanding that the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care is working to develop legislation designed to improve access to oral health care. In a previous communication, we detailed several experiences faced by our nursing homes as they struggled to find dentists who would serve our residents, particularly those receiving Medical Assistance.

It has now come to our attention that arguments have been made that creating Oral Health Practitioners will not improve access for nursing home residents due to the fact that most nursing homes do not have adequate dental equipment. It is true that we do not equip our nursing homes with dental equipment. We also do not equip our nursing homes with surgical equipment, or with medical diagnostic equipment, but we typically do not have difficulty in obtaining surgical or diagnostic services for our residents.

If we could alleviate our dental access issues by simply equipping our homes with dental equipment, I assure you, we would make that happen. The access issue is not an equipment issue, but a practitioner issue. We applaud you in your attempt to resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Roberts  
CEO/President