

Dear Members of the Central Florida District Dental Association,

I am writing to sincerely thank you for selecting me as a recipient of the Howard Pranikoff Leadership Scholarship and for providing me the opportunity to attend this year's Dentists' Day on the Hill in Tallahassee. This was a unique event in the world of organized dentistry, as we were immersed in current issues on the first evening and then able to apply that knowledge shortly thereafter while speaking with legislators at the Capitol. It was meaningful to engage directly in efforts reflecting Dr. Pranikoff's mission: promoting the interests of both dentists and the patients we serve through thoughtful policy. My initial nerves about speaking in these meetings quickly dissipated as I realized that, in each conversation, I was taking ownership of a profession I am proud to be a part of.



During our time at the Capitol, we discussed several critical issues with state elected officials. These included supporting Medicaid dental funding and ensuring network adequacy, both of which are essential to improving patient access to care and sustaining provider participation. We also advocated for meaningful revisions to the Dental Student Loan Repayment Program to better recruit providers into underserved areas, as well as legislation to maintain high educational standards through licensure within the MOBILE Act. Additionally, we shared our enthusiasm for participating in this year's Florida Mission of Mercy, expressed hope for its continued support, and looked forward to bringing the event to Tallahassee next year.

What stood out most to me during these conversations was the effect the engagement had on the dental students and residents in the room. Many of us gained more insight into issues that would be affecting us in real time as we step into this career, and the concepts went from legislation on paper to something we embody and are able to discuss thoughtfully. I found that legislators do rely on our insight, and being able to share my perspective and hear from more experienced voices helped me appreciate the influence that we can have in these matters.

I also want to thank the dentists that took time away from their practice to be involved and be a resource for us newer participants. It was inspiring to see professionals who had attended the event for years, even decades, still have so much passion for the current issues and understanding of the legislative process, and I learned much from their stories.

This experience strengthened my commitment to advocacy and to continued involvement in the CFDDA and FDA, and I hope to become a faithful contributor to the profession as I move through residency and into my career. I am grateful for this opportunity and hope to carry forward the spirit of leadership and service that this scholarship represents. Thank you again for your support and for investing in the next generation of dental leaders.

Sincerely, Sarah
Maddox