



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Secures Funding in the State Budget to Expand Dental Care in Rural Areas

CATHARINE YOUNG April 1, 2015

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ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean), Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, successfully secured \$500,000 in the state budget supporting two programs that address the critical need for dental care in rural areas of New York State.

“Improving access to dental care will have dramatic positive effects on the health and well-being of children and adults living in underserved rural areas. These areas face unique challenges of availability and access to dental care, often a direct result of geographic distance and lack of providers,” said Senator Young.

Senator Young has worked with University at Buffalo Dean Michael Glick to establish the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program. For the second year in a row, the state budget includes \$250,000 to fund the continued expansion of this mobile dental service to children in the rural communities that make up Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties.

Prior to the pilot program’s establishment, the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine provided school-based mobile dentistry services to many children in Chautauqua County who have limited access to dental care. This accomplishment was achieved by using

a mobile dentist office retrofitted to a semi-truck that was funded through federal grants.

The pilot program is expanding these mobile dental services to Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties, along with strengthening the existing program in Chautauqua County. This year, the program expects to reach 30 schools, and several Head Start locations within the three counties. It also introduces smaller portable dental units that can be used to conduct exams and provide preventative care inside schools. This equipment will allow the mobile dentist office to travel throughout the region to deliver more intensive services.

The project involves dental students from the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, exposing them to the unique needs of rural populations and professional opportunities in rural areas.

“There is an urgent need for this program in our region. It directly addresses the oral health of children throughout the area. By providing preventative care, dental restorations, and educational materials, the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program will identify dental health issues and help children establish healthy dental habits,” said Senator Young.

Additionally, Senator Young obtained \$250,000 to fund a rural dental demonstration program that will be conducted by the New York State Dental Association (NYSDA). The program will sponsor two free dental clinics per year in four or five Federally Qualified Health Centers located in different rural areas of New York State. The clinics will provide free dental services for at-risk populations.

Not only will this program provide immediate dental services to patients, but it will also focus on the long-term importance of dental health. It includes an educational component to help patients maintain good oral health on an ongoing basis. The program also expects to help participants determine the best way to afford and manage their future dental costs.

These services are expected to reach 500 patients over the course of a year, providing at least \$600,000 in free dental care in underserved regions.

To accomplish this task, NYSDA members will volunteer their time and talents as dentists to provide these services. Their volunteer efforts will reduce the overall cost of the program, thus greatly expanding its reach.

NYSDA has used a similar program in the past to deliver dental care. This demonstration program expands upon that experience and adds a component that includes a long-term focus on the importance of dental health.

“I am proud to fund these two programs that will identify areas needing dental services, develop solutions, and provide much-needed dental care. It is good to know that healthy smiles are a significant part of this year’s budget,” said Senator Young.