

WORLD BIRTH DEFECTS DAY COSPONSOR S. 560/H.R. 1379, ENSURING LASTING SMILES ACT

March 3, 2019

Dear Member of Congress:

March 3rd is the 5th anniversary of World Birth Defects Day. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) takes this opportunity to highlight the *Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act* (S. 560/H.R. 1379) – important legislation recently introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Joni Ernst (R-IA), and by Representatives Collin Peterson (D-MN) and Denver Riggleman (R-VA). This bipartisan legislation will have a direct impact on patients with congenital anomalies by providing coverage for medically necessary services that repair or restore a patient’s anomaly – ensuring patients with birth defects have access to lifesaving treatments.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies birth defects as “common, costly, and critical” and reports that one in 33 newborns in the United States suffers from a congenital anomaly. Craniofacial anomalies, for example, can restrict a patient’s ability to breathe, eat, and speak in a normal manner. Therefore, highly personalized surgery to repair an anomaly helps the patient grow and function normally. Early intervention by a team of specialists, including plastic surgeons, is necessary to assess and oversee the patient’s treatment and development, sometimes over the course of several years.

While many private health insurance companies cover the preliminary procedures, they routinely deny or delay follow-up or corrective procedures claiming that they are cosmetic in nature– which fails to recognize the medical conditions of these patients. Delays in medically necessary care can negatively impact a child’s developmental milestones and coverage denials of a child’s reconstructive surgery, can result in families turning to Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or other safety net programs for coverage.

The Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act is supported by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons as well as more than 35 patient and provider organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, March of Dimes, National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias, and National Organization for Rare Disorders.

We urge you to cosponsor this important legislation. For more information or to cosponsor the bill, please contact Kathleen_Laird@baldwin.senate.gov (Sen. Baldwin), Hyder_Chowdhry@ernst.senate.gov (Sen. Ernst), Adam.Durand@mail.house.gov (Rep. Peterson), or Eli.Woerpel@mail.house.gov (Rep. Riggleman). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alan Matarasso, MD, FACS
President, American Society of Plastic Surgeons