



April 3, 2024

House Subcommittee on Department of Health & Human Services
State Capitol Building
Room 352
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Chairwoman Morse & Committee Members:

On behalf of the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry, we respectfully request an increase in ongoing funding for the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry in the FY25 State Budget. The School of Dentistry at the University of Detroit Mercy not only provides essential care for underserved populations, but it also provides the training and experience that our future oral health professionals need to adequately provide care across the entire state of Michigan.

Over the past several years, the dental clinic program has received ongoing support from the state at levels that vary from \$5 million to \$1 million. We urge the Committee to include **\$2,000,000** for the Dental Grant to preserve essential dental education for Michigan's citizens and necessary safety-net dental services for some of the most vulnerable and low-income residents of the State of Michigan. Past levels of funding have not kept pace with inflation, therefore resulting in an ever-decreasing resource in terms of real dollars.

State funding goes directly towards providing care for those who need it the most. The School of Dentistry is an important provider of primary oral health care to patients who would otherwise not have access to care. The City of Detroit and Southeast Michigan has a large area which is considered a Dental Health Profession Shortage Area. According to data from the Health Resources and Services Administration, as reported by the Kaiser Family Foundation the current population of dental practitioners can only meet 53 % of the demand for dental services. In addition to providing care in Southeast Michigan, Detroit Mercy students also work in clinics in rural and outstate Michigan as part of our community-based education rotations. This investment truly serves all areas of the state and addresses a critical health care and workforce need.

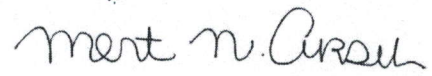
The School of Dentistry is a critical program at the University of Detroit Mercy, which has an estimated annual economic impact of more than \$344,840,000 on the metro Detroit community. Support for the School of Dentistry provides far-reaching support for the Detroit community and not only provides oral health care for those who need it, but also provides these future dentists and dental hygienists the skills needed to be able to meet the needs of patient populations who suffer from years deferred treatment due to a lack of resources.

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We urge the committee to provide funding for the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry at \$2 million ongoing. Thank you for your consideration in this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mert N. Aksu". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Mert N. Aksu, DDS, JD, MHSA
Diplomate, American Board of Dental Public Health
Dean and Professor