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Delta Dental Institute Launches Campaign to Drive Greater Diversity in the Oral Health Workforce

MARCH 20, 2023 – Washington, DC – Today, in recognition of World Oral Health Day, the [Delta Dental Institute](#) is launching a new campaign, [Driving Greater Diversity in the Oral Health Workforce](#), to help increase the number of oral health professionals from historically underrepresented groups.

While racial and ethnic diversity among health professionals is [linked](#) to improved outcomes and greater health equity, the current oral health workforce does not reflect the changing demographics of the U.S. population. The Delta Dental Institute's campaign will drive toward a more diverse oral health workforce by establishing the [Delta Dental Oral Health Diversity Fund](#) and by supporting initiatives in oral health education, research, and community investment.

"There is an urgent need to address the ongoing lack of minority representation in the oral health professions," said James W. Hutchison, President & CEO of Delta Dental Plans Association. "As the nation's oral health leader, we have a responsibility to tackle this issue head-on and make progress toward improving outcomes and advancing oral health equity for all."

The *Driving Greater Diversity in the Oral Health Workforce* campaign will:

- **Establish the Delta Dental Oral Health Diversity Fund:** In its first year, the [Delta Dental Oral Health Diversity Fund](#) will make targeted investments of up to \$1 million in comprehensive solutions, innovative pilots, and scalable models that inspire school-aged children from historically underrepresented groups to pursue a career in oral health.
- **Support oral health higher education:** Delta Dental will continue its investment in the future of the oral health workforce through the funding of scholarships and infrastructure at minority serving institutions. Since 2018, Delta Dental has invested nearly \$50 million in college and university programs. In addition, in 2021, Delta Dental supported scholarships, grants, and other workforce development opportunities that benefited more than 147,000 people, many from historically underrepresented groups.
- **Propel new research:** The Delta Dental Institute has sponsored the [Harvard School of Dental Medicine's](#) new research on the oral health workforce. As published in the latest edition of [JAMA Health Forum](#), lead researcher, Dr. Sung Eun Choi, SM, PhD, finds that expanding the dental workforce in oral health professional shortage areas through the National Health Service Corps would reduce the burden of dental caries among children in underserved areas and is cost-effective.
- **Engage with our communities:** Nearly a quarter of Delta Dental community investments in 2021 were dedicated to oral health education and workforce development. Delta Dental will continue its focus on supporting historically underrepresented groups by conducting outreach to students of all ages to elevate the importance of oral health to overall health and to introduce the possibility of a career in the oral health professions.

"Taking a multifaceted approach to addressing the barriers historically underrepresented groups face in choosing careers in oral health is critical to creating sustainable change in the industry," said Vivian Vasallo, Executive Director of the Delta Dental Institute. "Through this campaign, we will elevate the

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need for a more diverse oral health workforce and support the advancement of actionable solutions. We are eager to see unique, innovative proposals brought forward for consideration by the Delta Dental Oral Health Diversity Fund."

For those interested in applying for the Delta Dental Oral Health Diversity Fund and learning more about this campaign, please visit www.deltadentalinstitute.com/fund. Eligible applicants must be based in the United States, and may include 501(c)(3) organizations, private businesses, or limited or general partnerships.

About the Delta Dental Institute

The Delta Dental Institute is dedicated to advancing oral health for all Americans in partnership with Delta Dental companies and dedicated partners across the country. With expertise rooted in Delta Dental's rich history of oral health leadership, we engage in and support oral health research, community outreach, and advocacy, striving to ensure that everyone understands the importance of oral health to overall health and has access to the care they need. Visit deltadentalinstitute.com for more information.

About Delta Dental Plans Association

Based in Oak Brook, Illinois, Delta Dental Plans Association is the not-for-profit national association of the 39 independent Delta Dental companies. Through these companies, Delta Dental is the nation's largest dental insurance provider, covering more than 85 million Americans and offering the country's largest dental network with approximately 154,000 participating dentists. Over the last decade, Delta Dental companies provided over \$1.88 billion in direct and in-kind support to improve the oral health of our communities.