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CONTACT: Norman Williams
California Department of Health Care Services
Office of Communications
916-440-7660

MAYOR STEINBERG AND SMILE, CALIFORNIA CELEBRATE
CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

SACRAMENTO (January 31, 2020) – Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg joined the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today to emphasize the importance of good dental health and to proclaim February as Children's Dental Health Month in Sacramento. DHCS also unveiled the *Smile, California* Children's Dental Health Education Package, with grade-specific lesson plans to help educators teach children the basics of good oral health.

The event kicked off National Children's Dental Health Month sponsored by the American Dental Association.

"The health of our city, and the state of California as a whole, is dependent on the good health of our children," said Steinberg. "I am proud to declare February Children's Dental Health Month in Sacramento, and I encourage all members of the community to maintain their health by practicing good daily oral hygiene and visiting the dentist regularly."

Cavities, while preventable, are the most common chronic childhood disease—more common than asthma or hay fever. In California, 54 percent of kindergarteners and 70 percent of third graders have experienced cavities, and nearly one-third of children have untreated tooth decay, according to a report by the California Department of Public Health. Tooth decay can cause pain, as well as difficulty chewing and speaking. Tooth decay also leads to missed school; the CDPH reports that children in California miss 874,000 days of school annually due to dental health problems.

"Good oral health habits early in life are key to enjoying a lifetime of good health," said Jackson. "When students take home the *Smile, California* Children's Dental Health Education Package, our hope is that it will spark important conversations about good dental health."

More than 5.2 million children have dental coverage through Medi-Cal, yet many of their parents are not aware of the free dental services available to them, such as preventive services—sealants and fluoride varnish—that guard against decay.

The DHCS launched *Smile, California* in October 2018. *Smile, California* is a campaign to increase members' use of Medi-Cal's dental benefit. The Medi-Cal Dental Program covers routine, preventive and restorative care for about 12.8 million members in California. *Smile, California* educates eligible members about the free and low-cost services available to maintain a healthy smile and make it easier for members to access care.

The Smile, California Children's Dental Health Education Package and campaign fact sheet are available at SmileCalifornia.org.

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About the California Department of Health Care Services

DHCS provides Californians with access to affordable, integrated, high-quality health care, including medical, dental, mental health, substance use treatment services and long-term care. Our vision is to preserve and improve the overall health and well-being of all Californians.