

It is now more important than ever that we learn to work across differences towards our common goal.  
Unanimity is not expected or required,  
but a steadfast commitment to improving oral health for all North Carolinians is.



**NC ORAL HEALTH**  
COLLABORATIVE

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**"The old ways are dissolving and the new has not yet shown itself. If this is true then we must engage with one another differently, as explorers and discoverers."**

**-Margaret J. Wheatly**

Earlier this week I sat in an auditorium full of students at UNC - Chapel Hill. These were some of the future dentists and hygienists of our state, all of whom were members of the Student Chapter of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD). They were gathered to hear Dr. Michael Monopoli, the immediate past president of AAPHD, speak on the "Implications for Population Oral Health Within a Transformed Health Care Environment". As part of his presentation, Dr. Monopoli used the quote that appears above.

**The gift of this quote was compelling and timely. Let me share why:**

We are engaging in this work of building oral health equity at a time when the ground below us sometimes feels like shifting sand. The world of health care as we know it is undergoing significant transformation, and the entire oral health care system will undoubtedly be impacted by these shifts.

The time has come to move away from the status quo where only a few people have adequate access to care and many procedures are cost-prohibitive. We must move towards a future with a value-based payment system where:

- All primary health care providers understand that the vast majority of oral diseases are preventable and each provider has a role in helping patients manage and maintain optimal oral health.
- Oral health is commonly understood to be a part of overall health.
- All North Carolinians can access affordable preventive and restorative care close to home.

As we face uncertainty and change, it becomes even more important to hold firmly to our common goal, our purpose, our touchstone along the way: *to identify and resolve consumer-level and systemic barriers to good oral health and to accelerate implementation of policies and practices that reduce oral health disparities and promote improved oral health for all North Carolinians.*

Our attempts to create a democratic space where all voices are welcomed and valued equally is a new way of creating oral health parity for the people of our state. We trust that other 'explorers and discoverers' will step up and join us in constructive dialogue and discourse to explore innovative, as well as tried and true, ways of achieving oral health equity. It is now more important than ever that we learn to work across differences towards our common goal. Unanimity is not expected or required, but a steadfast commitment to improving oral health for all North Carolinians is.



**We are sending the invitation far and wide:** to any and everyone who understands the value of good oral health, of an uninhibited smile, of confidence in verbal communication: JOIN US. To those who believe that access to good oral healthcare is a right, not a privilege and should therefore be available to all who need it, we say... JOIN US. As we learn more about the science and delivery of oral healthcare, it is increasingly clear that this vision is not too distant.

*We hope you will join us in achieving it.*

### Important Updates:

- On March 21st, the North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative (NCOHC) received a letter from Dr. Ron Venezia, President of the North Carolina Dental Society (NCDS) indicating their decision to withdraw from the NCOHC. The letter cited concerns about the collaborative nature of our work and pursuit of policy change, two tenets that are central to our vision and approach. We hope that some time in the future the NCDS will re-engage with us to deliver on that vision. You can read our response [here](#).
- Recently, the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (nccPA) Health Foundation shared a new video, *Joining the Fight for Oral Health: Promoting Health Equity*. The video makes a clarion call for engagement through outreach and volunteerism to advance equitable healthcare with oral health as the exemplar. Watch the video [here](#).
- The NCOHC just got a great shout-out from the latest NC Medical Journal. Read it [here](#).

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### SAVE THE DATE:

### Join us at the NCOHC Spring Convening

On Friday, May 13th, our Spring Convening will be held at the beautiful Paul J. Ceiner Botanical Garden in Kernersville, NC. We are bringing our gathering closer to the middle of our state, and hope that you Triangle folks will still make the scenic drive to join us. Good food, great folks, fabulous time. Plus, mileage reimbursement will be available for those who need it. Please be on the lookout for more details and registration to come!

### Calling all explorers and discoverers:

If you **STILL** haven't become a member of the NCOHC, there's no time like the present! [Click here](#) to sign our Statement of Support!

Please email signed form to Emily Bernson at [emily.bernson@foundationhli.org](mailto:emily.bernson@foundationhli.org) or mail to 2401 Weston Parkway, Suite 203, Cary, NC 27513

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