



2025–26 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Todd V. Ester, D.D.S., M.A.
Chair of the Board

Cherae M. Farmer-Dixon, D.D.S., M.S.P.H.
Chair-elect of the Board

Susan H. Kass, M.Ed., Ed.D., RDH
Immediate Past Chair of the Board

Mert N. Aksu, D.D.S., J.D.,
M.H.S.A., Cert DPH
Board Director for Deans

Russ Bergman, D.M.D.
Board Director for
Advanced Education Programs

Dharini van der Hoeven, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Board Director for Sections

Marion Manski, M.S., RDH
Board Director for Allied
Dental Program Directors

Justin Bower, M.B.A.
Board Director for the Corporate Council

Erin Gross, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D.
Board Director for Faculties

Justin James Donato
Board Director for Students,
Residents and Fellows

Karen P. West, D.M.D., M.P.H.
President and CEO

The mission of ADEA is to develop
an inclusive, future-ready oral health
workforce prepared to improve the health
of all people and communities through
leadership, education and collaboration.

655 K Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202.289.7201
Fax: 202.289.7204
adea.org

ADEA Statement on Proposed FY26 HHS Funding Levels

Recently a document, called a “budget passback,” was leaked from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This passback is from OMB to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and reflects OMB’s recommendations on HHS’s proposed funding levels to be included in the fiscal year 2026 president’s budget.

This document proposes a \$40 billion funding cut below the current fiscal year budget for HHS and policy changes that significantly impact oral health education and programs. This follows HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.’s announcement earlier this month that he is reducing HHS staffing by about 25%. The proposed budget would continue this trajectory with more consolidations and eliminations.

The proposal would implement Secretary Kennedy’s plan to create the new Agency for a Healthy America by consolidating several parts of HHS, including the Health Resources and Services Administration (where most oral health programs are located), into the new agency and eliminating oral health training programs along with other education and training programs in medicine and nursing.

In addition, the National Institutes of Health would be reduced from the current 27 institutes and centers to eight and its budget reduced from the current \$49 billion to \$26 billion. The National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research would be eliminated and its mission folded into a new National Institute on Neuroscience and Brain Research, following the June 2024 [proposal](#) from the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

If this is indeed to be the president’s HHS budget proposal to be submitted to Congress, it would be counterproductive to the goal stated in his February Executive Order “Establishing The President’s Make America Healthy Again Commission” to move “toward understanding and drastically lowering chronic disease rates and ending childhood chronic disease.”

Congress has the final say on the funding levels for these programs. Therefore, ADEA has been meeting with Members of Congress on our funding priorities for the next fiscal year and providing them and their staff with additional information and justifications.

This is a time when all oral health educators and professionals must share with their Representatives and Senators the importance of oral health and the need to sustain the oral health training programs at the federal level to help address workforce shortages in oral health and other health care professions. It is a call to action!

Karen P. West, D.M.D., M.P.H.
President and CEO