LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

July 10, 2017

Dear Superintendent,

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has recently partnered with Well-Ahead Louisiana, an initiative of the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), for its Bright Smiles for Bright Futures Oral Health Screening Project. This project aims to assess oral health among Louisiana students. In 2009, Bright Smiles for Bright Futures uncovered that a startling 42% of Louisiana third graders had untreated tooth decay, 66% had an untreated cavity, and 43% needed to be referred to a dentist for further treatment.

Studies show that healthy students are better learners. Discomfort from untreated oral health issues can cause difficulty concentrating and school absences. Bright Smiles for Bright Futures gives our students the opportunity for a healthy smile, which is vital to overall health. The project provides a basic, non-invasive oral health screening to third grade students. This means that a licensed dental hygienist screens eligible students for dental sealants, tooth decay, and cavities, and makes appropriate dental recommendations. Screenings are performed on campus and take less than two minutes per student. In addition, students receive brief oral health education and dental supplies.

Schools within your district have been selected to join the Bright Smiles for Bright Futures project. Please see attached for a list of specific schools. Every student deserves the opportunity to be healthy, so I encourage you to be a champion for healthy smiles by supporting the project.

Thank you for your consideration. To opt-in, or for more information, contact Kaitlyn King, Well-Ahead Louisiana's Oral Health Coordinator, at (225) 342-9499 or Kaitlyn.King@la.gov.

Sincerely,

John White
State Superintendent
Louisiana Department of Education

Parham Jaberi, MD, MPH
Assistant Secretary
Office of Public Health