

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DANNY K. DAVIS
AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND AGENCY ORGANIZATION
HEARING ON**

**WE'D LIKE TO SEE YOU SMILE: THE NEED FOR DENTAL AND
VISION BENEFITS FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES**

February 24, 2004

Chairwoman Davis, visual health and oral health are integral to general health. Eye and oral diseases are progressive and become more complex over time. Our ability to eat, see, read, learn, and communicate all depend on good visual and oral health.

Periodic eye and dental examinations are an important part of routine preventive health care. Many visual and oral conditions present no obvious symptoms. Therefore, individuals are often unaware that problems exist.

There are safe and effective measures to prevent the most common eye and dental diseases. That is why early diagnosis and treatment are important for maintaining good visual and oral health and why a vision and dental benefit should be made available to federal employees and annuitants.

We know that in 1987 the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) stopped plans in the Federal Health Benefits program from adding new vision and dental packages. OPM did so for various reasons. However, that decision was made over 15 years ago, and it is time to take a fresh look at how we can meet the visual and oral health needs of federal employees.

Let's not be shortsighted (no pun intended). In the long run, preventive care, through periodic examinations and doctor visits, will help keep down long term vision and dental costs due to early detection.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses and appreciate them taking the time to share their insight on this issue.