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AADOCR Statement on Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s HHS Secretary Nomination

Alexandria, VA – The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR) released the following statement today in response to the Senate Finance Committee voting to favorably report the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the full Senate.

The AADOCR, a 3,000-member organization representing multidisciplinary scientists who advance dental, oral, and craniofacial research, is disappointed that a Senate panel has voted to advance the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to be HHS Secretary despite his well-documented stance on critical public health issues and the actions he has promised to take if he is confirmed by the Senate.

Mr. Kennedy has demonstrated a consistent disregard for scientific evidence and has promulgated misinformation about vital public health programs, including the safety and efficacy of vaccines and the benefits of community water fluoridation.

He has repeatedly advocated for the removal of fluoride from public drinking water, a position that directly contradicts decades of scientific research and public health policy. The overwhelming consensus among health and scientific communities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, and the World Health Organization, is that water fluoridation is a safe and effective measure for preventing tooth decay.

In fact, the CDC has called fluoridation of drinking water one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century because of its efficacy and ability to distribute fluoride equitably and cost-effectively. Mr. Kennedy's promotion of debunked claims about fluoride contradicts evidence-based public health policies and poses a serious risk to the oral health of millions of Americans.

Further, Mr. Kennedy's comments about how he would manage the public health workforce raise serious doubts about his ability to lead responsibly. He said in November that he would like to clear out "entire departments" of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and on Day 1, terminate 600 employees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He has previously threatened to remove federal employees who are involved in research decisions that he personally disagrees with.

These statements demonstrate a lack of respect for the expertise of scientists and the medical research community. The health and well-being of the American public rely on an evidence-driven

approach, and any actions that diminish the capacity of the NIH to carry out critical research are deeply troubling.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s scientifically unsupported views erode public trust in health institutions and proven medical treatments, which puts vulnerable populations at risk. AADOCR therefore urges the U.S. Senate to reject his confirmation and appoint a leader at HHS who prioritizes empirical science and best practices, and who supports the professionals and institutions that safeguard our public health.

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The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research is a nonprofit organization with a mission to drive dental, oral, and craniofacial research to advance health and well-being. AADOCR represents the individual scientists, clinician-scientists, dental professionals, and students based in academic, government, non-profit and private-sector institutions who share our mission. AADOCR is the largest division of the International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research. Learn more at www.aadocr.org.