



Aidan, a 14-year-old from Slinger, Wisc., loves physical education class and plays basketball in school. But he's no ordinary 14-year-old; he's working to make a big impact on public policy affecting kids across the country.

Aidan was born with ectodermal dysplasia – a congenital genetic disorder that affects the growth and development of hair, nails, teeth, skin, glands, among other symptoms. Ectodermal dysplasia (ED) affects each patient differently. Aidan was born without most of his teeth, which has caused many difficulties with chewing, eating, swallowing and speech which significantly impact his quality of life and will require ongoing care.

Most health plans and states require coverage for medically necessary health care services related to congenital anomalies, like ED. Unfortunately, the Abbotts and other families have discovered that this coverage doesn't always apply to oral or dental health-related procedures and care.

The Abbotts found themselves on an advocacy mission. While advocating for their son's care, Becky and Tom realized that many other families were similarly impacted by this issue. Facing denials, some families find themselves having to forgo necessary care for their child or pay for complex treatments out-of-pocket.

This spurred her to get involved with various associations to raise awareness and effect change.

Aidan and his family met with Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin and shared their experience. His story inspired the Senator to introduce bipartisan legislation called the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA) to help close the coverage gap for patients with congenital anomalies to access medically necessary dental- and oral-health related procedures. The Abbotts have sparked the potential for meaningful change for families across the country; they exemplify the amazing power of how one family taking part in advocacy can make a difference.

Becky is a member of our Children's Advocacy Network (CAN) and believes that anybody can be an advocate – as long as you're passionate and want to fight for change. "No matter what your background is, your story is important. It may seem like legislators aren't working for you or are too busy, but if they don't hear stories from families, they will not know how to make changes that help kids and families. Everyone should tell their stories and raise your voices because together, our voices are louder. Hearing our stories does make a difference. Whether in Wisconsin or in Washington, families need to share their stories because nothing will change without them." – Becky Abbott

Read more about Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act: <https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/ensuring-lasting-smiles-act-2019>

Being part of CAN helps give *everyone* an opportunity to help change policies and improve the lives of kids and families in Wisconsin and across the nation. Wondering how you can get involved? Join CAN: www.chw.org/CANsignup