

FDA Secretary Application

Name

Bertram Hughes

Please upload a photo of yourself. A professional headshot is preferred.



Please list your qualifications for this position. (Leadership roles, experience, etc.)

Current FDA BOT, Past General Chair FDC-CCCE, ADA Delegate, Past ADA Reference Committee, ADA CDBP, Past ADA C-CERP, Past ADA CLA Chair x 2, Past Asst Sec. NDA, Past President NDA Foundation, NDA membership and Scientific Sessions Chair, CFDDA Delegate and Executive Committee, Past Alachua County DA President, GAC Consultant, Legislative Contact Dentist, Chair FDA Public Dental Benefit programs task force, ADA Committee on Coding and Transactions, ADA Commercial Insurance., Florida Mission of Mercy Co-Chair 2025, FDA Services Board,.

Please list any boards, committees or other groups you currently or previously have served on (dental or non-dental) along with years of service.

FDA BOT 2020-present
FDA HOD 1999-2020
FDC, CCCE 2010-2012, 2012-2019 General Chair
ACDA Board 2000-present
CFDDA Executive Committee 2019-present
NDA Asst Secretary 2006 and 2007
NDA Foundation 1988-2021, President 2016-2021
Florida Mission of Mercy Co-Chair 2025
Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders 2020-2023
NDA Corporate Roundtable 2004-2010
STOP! Children's Cancer 1999-2021
First Union Bank Minority Banking Board 1991-2004
HOA President for a community 2023-present
African American Accountability Alliance 2015-2020
Dental Lifeline Florida 2025

Please share any accomplishments while serving in other leadership positions.

FDC-CCCE: Helped reshape the FDC convention to what it is today, growing it over 82% in attendance over

my tenure.

NDA Membership Chair: Grew membership by 170% over my tenure

ADA Delegate: Submitted and passed two resolutions at ADA House

Developed the training program for inspiring new leaders across the world for AOHAB

Developed the Partner's For Life program for the NDA Foundation and grew it to a multi-million dollar organization during my tenure

Retooled the framework for FLAMOM Central Supply

FDA BOT: Helped to begin a quick source membership tool for ADA/FDA membership.

Helped with testimony on legislation for opt in for virtual credit cards. Also, testified concerning Dental Therapy and Medicaid funding

Have you participated in continuing education or training programs in leadership? If yes, please share your experience.

I have had the opportunity to participate in many CE or training sessions for leadership. These include, but is not limited to: a number of spokesperson training sessions where I learned more effective ways to communicate with the public and legislators. I learned effective ways of communicating for TV, radio, print journalism and in person interviews. I have also had legislative training opportunities, learning how to strategize legislative efforts and implement messaging. I have been able to attend association executive training which has helped me to understand effective board strategies, strategic planning, board policies and implementation processes. Another opportunity that I have had is in the area of Fundraising. I have attended a number fundraising strategy sessions and am well read on the topic. Implementing the strategy for growing the NDA Foundation has helped provide the legacy that it stands on today. Recently, I completed a fellowship at Harvard Medical School on Global Health Leadership. Here, I imagined the program "Dentistry My Way." This is a novel approach to changing the dental benefit system as we know it today. The concept of imagineering was crafted by me and passed by the ADA HOD as resolution 319 at the 2024 session. It is currently being presented through the ADA joint committee of CDBP, CGA and CDP.

Do you think there is value in the tripartite membership structure (ADA/FDA/Component)? Why or why not?

There is definitely value in the tripartite membership. However, all parties must be on the same page. There appears to be some cultural differences in different aspects of the tripartite relationship. States such as Florida and California are doing quite well as far as being progressive, meeting the needs of members and preparing themselves for the ever changing demographics of the dental profession. The way we package the tripartite may be the struggle that will be facing membership. While some dentists recognize the power of the ADA, others are only locally connected and just want to "pay" for that interaction. Trying to unify dues may lead to a better system going forward in ensuring membership renewal. With the use of AI, it may be possible to target our members better, so that they are more connected to the messaging that resonates best for them. We definitely need the large conglomerate structure of the ADA to help drive these mega ideas to help all states and all members. While there are differences in our communities, we must continue to strive for relevancy in the minds of all dentists. Getting each segment of the tripartite, including the local associations on message is important to this effort. Grassroots is where success truly lies.

The mission of the FDA is to "Help Members Succeed". Do you feel that the association is fully utilizing its resources to fulfill this mission? If yes, share why. If no, what additional actions would you propose?

I believe the FDA is working very diligently in "Helping Members to Succeed." Some of the programs, especially the recent one in helping members achieve better mental health are important in the FDA for supporting this mission. Some of the other programs through FDA Services and the recent investment program are quietly providing the resources necessary to maintain and grow the FDA's ability to service its members. The collective efforts of programs such as the aforementioned and others, such as FDC, LEAD, DDOH, FLAMOM, WIND, Student receptions, Graduate student interactions, ACD, Signing day, Key issue webinars etc... have provided the necessary framework for member success. The culture of the ADA team in responsiveness to the member has also been a cornerstone for our success.. The FDA does not look to just take a victory lap. Reaching out to members in time of need or when they are at their most vulnerable state has been one of the most valuable tools the FDA utilizes. Our COVID response was one of the best of any organization, dental and non-dental.

Some of the areas we can improve upon include messaging for issues that affect our practices and dealing with dental benefits, including Medicaid. As far as messaging, I would like to us, and have been working on, developing a partnership agreement with atmosphere TV. This is a streaming broadcast for reception areas or operatories, in the dental office. They also penetrate other markets. This platform would give the dental profession an opportunity to communicate with the public on issues that directly affect them and their health. Messaging on Fluoride is just one example of how we could be getting our message out there. Another proposed action would be a comprehensive insurance reform package and strategy to work from legislatively. It is well known that the Dental Medicaid desperately needs reform. Creating a strategy with timelines and benchmark achievement goals would be helpful to many of our dentists that are servicing patients with dental benefit plans. While it is sometimes difficult for the dental associations to work collectively on the behalf of dentists, approaching the many insurance issues from the patients perspective may be the better strategy to evoke change and the needed reforms such that doctors and patients can work together without the current intrusion issues. As an association, we also have to keep impressing the message of the value proposition and need of the association. Dentists often take for granted the many processes in the background that are at work to help them practice. The communication TV platform that I mentioned previously could also be a valuable tool for that messaging, as well.

What are the biggest challenges you see for the FDA as an organization in the coming years and what are ways you suggest the FDA can meet those challenges?

I believe that the two biggest challenges for the FDA will be membership and the regulatory environment surrounding the dental profession. However, all roads lead to membership. From the perspective of community, most people like to belong to one. This is where they seek advice, comfort and social constructs to help them feel more fulfilled. With the current DSO penetration into dentistry, they are offering this sense of community without having to disclose the "dues" that the employee dentists are necessarily paying. Unfortunately, this corporate model is utilizing the dental associations for their political agenda to better the dental profession. This, though, is putting a cost burden on these associations as membership dwindles due to the corporate penetration. Even with the most recent issue of fluoride, the DSOs have been noticeably absent from the legislative and local government process. As we, as the FDA, try to fight for our profession and our patients, the resources become less and less without a sustainable membership. Understanding the vicious triangle of schools, banks and DSOs explains how the dental profession can turn into an employee based system similar to pharmacy.

Challenging the "insurance" based model in dentistry is one of the key principles in helping to sustain our membership. Dentist, upon graduation, must be able to have a viable option to practice independent of being an employee. For this to occur, bold changes need to be enacted so that the public is not preyed upon by large conglomerate insurance companies, and that dentists have the ability to see patients without third party intrusion rules based on profit. While legislative action by the association's are helpful, remembering that the incumbents usually win this fight in the end. Bold and creative supportive actions by our associations will be what tips the needle. Finding a way to create amore unified contracting voice, creating a negotiating entity for fair pay understanding the boldness of a networked platform for membership plans are just a few thoughts that loudly show our members and potential members the value proposition. Communicating the message will also be as important as implementing the strategy.

While dentists can "compete" in the marketplace, associations must be able to show that the collective efforts of the dental professionals is good for the patients, and that the current model only seeks to extract money out of a system for an industry's financial gain. The FDA must continue to listen to its members, and continue to be member driven. It is important for the FDA along with some other partner state associations to impress upon the ADA this concept. The FDA must continue servicing its members in the personal way that has helped the FDA become so successful. It will not be enough for the FDA team to only be engaged. Leaders, too, must pay a role in new and potential member engagement.

Please provide any additional information you would like to share.

I owe much of my career in dentistry to my education at the University of Florida and to the different dental associations that I have been a member of. I often tell early career dentists that much of the advice that I may be giving them is due to my involvement in organized dentistry. My commitment to the dental profession is strong, and not one that I take lightly. The contacts, friends and professional relationships have been invaluable. I have had opportunities that, I well know, would not have been afforded to me without my place in organized dentistry. For this, I am extremely grateful. I would be honored to continue serving this great profession, and appreciate all the confidence that others have had in me while on this journey.