

## **Detria Austin Everson's Prepared Remarks**

*Georgia School of Orthodontics / John and Lillian Miles Lewis Foundation  
Announcement (April 3, 2025)*

I am Detria Austin Everson, President and CEO of the John and Lillian Miles Lewis Foundation. On behalf of our board chair, Michael Collins and our entire board of directors, I bring you greetings. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge our current and founding board members who have been able to join us this afternoon.

It is an honor and privilege to stand before you on this third day of April in the year two thousand twenty-five. This moment invites us to reflect on the lasting legacy of Congressman John Robert Lewis. His life is a profound testament to his steadfast dedication to the pursuit of justice and equality. Through his actions and contributions, he exemplified a deep commitment to improving the world for everyone, consistently advocating for fairness, love, and opportunities for all.

In many respects, the essence of that commitment is embodied in the work we are gathered to celebrate today. Just as John Lewis championed the importance of justice and the creation of a more inclusive society, we, too, believe in the transformative power of opportunity. We aim to foster a future where more children in our community have the chance to see orthodontists who resemble them and can inspire them to chase their dreams.

It is inspiring to see a leader who understands the importance of providing these opportunities. The generosity behind this incredible commitment of \$8.5 Million over 12 years is a profound investment in a more inclusive future, one where everyone has a chance to succeed.

**TAKE A moment to let that sink in. \$8.5 Million for the John Lewis Legacy Scholarships from the Georgia School of Orthodontics. Wow. Just Wow**

As the saying goes, "If you can see it, you can be it." These scholarships give dental students the chance to envision themselves as leaders in their field, and I look forward to the day when one of your scholarship recipients receives the message that their former patient has also received such an honor. This is how the Georgia School of Orthodontics joins us in carrying forward the legacy of justice, equality, and opportunity that Congressman Lewis so strongly believed in.

This partnership we are announcing today is more than just a financial commitment, however. Georgia School of Orthodontics has committed to integrating significant

opportunities to teach about the life and legacy of John and Lillian Miles Lewis. Not just to the scholarship recipients, but to ALL of their residents.

Each class will participate in civil rights tours of Atlanta, Montgomery and Selma, will watch the Good Trouble Documentary, read Carry On: Reflections for a New Generation by John Lewis, and participate in discussions about his work. I am also excited that we will have the opportunity to introduce younger students (middle and high school age students in the Atlanta area) to orthodontics by facilitating tours of these facilities. Particularly the new Lazzara Orthodontic Research Center, where much of the training on the Lewis' legacy will take place.

Thank you, Georgia School of Orthodontics, for your unwavering commitment to education, service, and creating opportunities for the next generation of leaders. Your dedication to ensuring that students have the resources, support, and inspiration they need to succeed makes a lasting impact on individuals and our community. Through your generosity, you are helping to shape a future where excellence and compassion go hand in hand.

Chris, on a personal note, thank you so much for your and your family's support and partnership. The sincerity with which you have approached this work, at every turn, is a testament to your parents and the values you were raised with. Values that were clearly shared by John and Lillian Miles Lewis.

As I take my seat, I have a couple of amazing quotes... and I am sure you expect one to be from our Late Congressman John Lewis... AND YOU ARE RIGHT! SO, I will start there!

During an interview in 2015, Congressman Lewis said: "There are hundreds and thousands of young Americans who cannot or will not receive an education, because in order to get an education, you have to spend money. Students come out of college and universities with unbelievable debt. It's not right, it's not fair, and it's not just, in a society such as ours."

He was talking about undergraduate education, but the sentiment extends to this level of professional training. You are clearly doing what is right, what is fair and what is just. And the John and Lillian Miles Lewis Foundation is so proud to be your partner in this effort.

Now, our final thought to ponder, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." – Mahatma Gandhi. Let us be mindful that by serving others and embracing opportunities, we not only assist those in need but also uncover our truest purpose along the way.

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For more information, please contact:

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