



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

*Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary*

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

### **RE: Letter of Information – SB 511 – Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee members:

The Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of information on SB 511 – Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland.

SB 511 establishes a task force to (1) analyze the current access to dental services for all residents of the State; (2) identify areas of the State where a significant number of residents are not receiving oral health care services, distinguishing between pediatric and adult populations; (3) identify barriers to receiving dental services in these areas; (4) analyze the impact of these barriers; (5) assess the options to eliminate the barriers; and (6) make recommendations regarding methods to increase access to dental services in the State.

**The committee should be aware that the work of the proposed task force would be duplicative of the current efforts of the Department and the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC).** The Medical Assistance Program, in conjunction with the Office of Oral Health, submits an annual oral health access report (originally required by SB 598 – Ch. 113 of the Acts of 1998) under Health-General Article, §13-2504(b). The report includes information on Medicaid dental utilization and expenditures, as well as information on the actions taken by the Department and Office of Oral Health to increase access to dental services and overall oral health in the State.

The Department established the Office of Oral Health (OOH) in 1996 to address dental or oral diseases affecting the State's neediest children and adults. The mission of OOH is to improve the oral health of Maryland residents through a variety of public oral health initiatives and interventions.

MDAC's mission is to develop and maintain a statewide partnership of individuals and organizations working together to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care. In 2018, the organization published a five-year strategic plan to improve access, oral health literacy, and oral disease prevention in the State. Additionally, in 2016, the Hilltop Institute prepared a report for MDAC assessing the potential cost to expand dental services available through the

Medicaid Program. In 2017, MDAC submitted a report to the legislature on the annual cost of emergency room visits for individuals who have chronic dental conditions and who are uninsured or covered by Medicaid, Medicare or commercial insurance. MDAC has expressed its interest in evaluating the Medicaid limited adult dental pilot that was launched in June 2019.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Director of Governmental Affairs Webster Ye at (410) 260-3190 or [webster.ye@maryland.gov](mailto:webster.ye@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert R. Neall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert R. Neall  
Secretary