



Maryland Community Health System

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 150 – Maryland Medical Assistance – Dental Coverage for Adults

Hearing Date: January 25, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Community Health System (MCHS) strongly supports *Senate Bill 150- Maryland Medical Assistance – Dental Coverage for Adults*. We are a network of federally qualified health care providers across Maryland, and our mission is to provide health care services to people who are underserved.

Senate Bill 150 is our highest policy priority. Maryland is considered one of the most innovative states, if not the most innovative, in utilizing the health care system to improve population health. Yet, we are woefully behind nearly every state – except Alabama and Tennessee – in dental coverage for adults in Medicaid.ⁱ

There is ample peer reviewed research that shows dental coverage lowers overall health care costs, including a Cigna study that reported a reduction of annual costs for patients with diabetes (\$1,687 a year) and heart disease (\$2,101).ⁱⁱ We know that investment in dental coverage makes sense in terms of health outcomes and health care costs.

We want to focus on the real-life impact of the lack of dental coverage. Every day, our health centers see patients who have forgone dental services because they did not have coverage. They are often in pain, battling to control chronic disease such as diabetes, and suffering because they are so self-conscious about the appearance of their mouths. By the time they seek services, there are no other clinical options but to remove teeth, which can be devastating on a personal and professional level.

Maryland has so strongly invested in other preventative services. At the core, dental coverage is one of the most basic strategies to improve overall health and the lives of our individual patients. We need to offer dental coverage to all adults in Medicaid to move forward in improving public health.

We ask for a favorable report, and we stand ready to assist the Committee in every way possible in this endeavor. If we can be helpful in any way, please let us know by contacting Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ https://www.chcs.org/media/Adult-Oral-Health-Fact-Sheet_091519.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cigna.com/assets/docs/business/large-employers/dental-white-paper.pdf>