



A Voice for Advanced Practice Clinicians in Maryland



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Support

SB150: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults

January 25, 2022

The Maryland Academy of Advanced Practice Clinicians supports passage of Senator Malcolm Augustine's bill
SB150: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults

I am a family nurse practitioner with over forty years' experience providing obstetrics and gynecology services to women throughout the life span in Maryland and DC. My practice was in Southern Maryland for thirty years, where there continues to be access-to-care issues for many people, but particularly vulnerable populations with limited financial resources. Adult dental care is among the most serious threats to the long-term health of vulnerable populations.

Maryland is behind almost every other state in adult dental coverage in Medicaid. Only three states – Alabama, Maryland, and Tennessee do not require some level of Medicaid coverage for adult dental.

The peer-review research strongly demonstrates a strong return on investment for adult dental coverage. States can lower costs and improve lives by investing in dental coverage:

- In a study on dental coverage for New York's Medicaid program, preventative dental care lowered overall health care costs by \$530.50 per participant annually.
- A study of insurance data, published in 2014 in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, demonstrated that periodontal treatment lowered overall health care costs for the following: \$2,841 for type 2 diabetes, \$5,681 for cerebral vascular disease, and \$1,040 for coronary artery disease.

The Affordable Care Act demonstrated that expanded coverage is an important part of the strategy to address health disparities: With more people covered, Black and Hispanic adults encountered fewer cost-related barriers in accessing overall care:

- Nearly twice as many non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have untreated cavities as non-Hispanic White adults. More than 9 in 10 older adults have had cavities, and 1 in 6 have untreated cavities. Older non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have 2 to 3 times the rate of untreated cavities as older non-Hispanic White adults.
- 82% of adults report that poor oral health affects their ability to interview and find employment.

And last, but not least:

- Dental coverage for adults in Medicaid has a positive impact on the oral health of children. In a recent study, researchers found that untreated caries dropped by 5% when the parents had dental coverage for one year in the Medicaid program.

This bill will provide adult dental care to vulnerable populations under the Medical Assistance Program. Adequate dental care is known to reduce complications from diseases such as diabetes, coronary artery disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and cerebral vascular disease.

We urge a favorable report on this bill. If you need further information, please contact me at LDianaart@aol.com.

Sincerely,
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MAAPC Legislative Co-Chair

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