



Committee: Senate Finance Committee
Bill Number: Senate Bill 150
Title: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults
Hearing Date: January 25, 2022
Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) strongly supports *Senate Bill 150 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults*. The bill would address a critical gap in Medicaid coverage by establishing an adult dental program. Maryland is among just three states, with the other two being Alabama and Tennessee, without some form of required dental coverage for adults in Medicaid.ⁱ

Maryland has been striving to improve population health through innovative programs such as the Total Cost of Care Model and the Maryland Primary Care Program. However, we will not achieve our public health goals, including addressing health disparities without dental coverage in Medicaid. Dental care is primary care, with many dental services being preventative.

If our state wants to bend the health care cost curve, we need to invest in dental coverage for adult in Medicaid. Researchⁱⁱ demonstrates that dental coverage lowers health care costs for people with chronic diseases:

- \$2,841 for type 2 diabetes
- \$5,681 for cerebral vascular disease, and
- \$1,040 for coronary artery disease.

As we have seen with experience with the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid coverage is one of the most effective tools to increase access to care, improve health outcomes, and address health disparities.ⁱⁱⁱ We need to use every tool available to keep people healthy. We ask you for a favorable vote on this legislation. If we can provide any additional support, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

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

ⁱⁱ Jeffcoat et al. Impact of periodontal therapy on general health: evidence from insurance data for five systemic conditions. Am J Prev Med. 2014

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2020/jan/how-ACA-narrowed-racial-ethnic-disparities-access>