



VCU

School of Dentistry

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass:

I strongly support **Senate Bill 150 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults**. As a lifelong resident of Maryland, an epidemiologist, and now a soon-to-be Maryland dentist, I have seen first-hand the potential positive impact this bill would have upon the overall health and well-being of Maryland residents.

On July 1st, 2021, the state of Virginia underwent a Medicaid expansion that provided a comprehensive dental benefit for all Medicaid subscribers. As a 4th year dental student in Virginia, I have the privilege of providing direct dental care for these patients. Since the expansion, I have personally treated an increased number of people who have not had dental care in years, sometimes decades, and the experience has been incredibly rewarding.

A patient of mine who has made the largest impression is a 23 year old, who despite working a full time job, does not have dental insurance. Due to a series of unfortunate circumstances, his dental health was in poor condition and this expansion enabled him to obtain dental care for the first time since he was 18. Growing up, he had never been taught the importance of diet and how to properly take care of his teeth. Since his very first visit, he has been the most positive, engaged, and eager-to-learn patient I have ever had. After his visit, the very next day, he texted me a picture of how he had incorporated one of the dental care suggestions I had asked for him to try. Although I am still working with him to repair the damage to his teeth from years past, one visit consisting of an exam, x-rays, cleaning, oral hygiene instructions, and dietary counseling has already set him up for a lifetime of improved dental health.

Another patient had lived without any teeth or dentures for years and had been unable to find employment because of it. At the start of the pandemic, with the benefit of wearing a mask, she was able to conceal her condition and find a position. However, when the indoor mask mandate was lifted later on, she immediately lost her job once her employer saw her mouth. Her ability to access dental care and have dentures made will finally give her a chance at a normal life.

There are countless other similar stories that showcase how life-changing the passage of this bill could be. The potential to make a positive impact of this magnitude upon so many people's lives does not happen often, so let's not miss this opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and I urge a favorable vote. If I can provide any further information please contact me at romanaa@vcu.edu.

Respectfully,
Agnieszka Roman, MPH
VCU School of Dentistry, Class of 2022