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February 9, 2022

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass

Room 241

House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass,

The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore (CFES) strongly supports HB 006 *Maryland Medicaid Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults*.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, low-income adults suffer a disproportionate share of dental disease, and are nearly 40% less likely to have a dental visit in the past 12 months, compared to those with higher incomes. Adults who are disabled, homeless, homebound, or institutionalized have an even greater risk of dental disease. Furthermore, poor oral health can elevate risks for chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease and can lead to preventable use of costly emergency care.

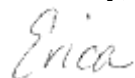
Peer-review research demonstrates a strong return on investment for adult dental coverage. A 2021 report in *The Journal of Dental Research* analyzing the impact of New York State's Medicaid program confirmed that preventative dental care lowered overall health care costs by \$530.50 per participant annually. Yet Maryland is one of only three states to not require some level of Medicaid coverage for adult dental service.

CFES is currently facilitating an adult oral health task force, which includes many local dental health providers, to generate short- and long-term solutions to the needs of vulnerable populations in our region. In late 2021, the CFES Board of Directors approved a \$20,000 allocation toward matching an \$80,000 grant from the Schattner Foundation to support adult oral health needs. We are also assisting to obtain matching dollars from additional funders for this project.

As leaders, grant makers, and stewards of philanthropy, CFES connects people who care to causes that matter for the common good of the Lower Eastern Shore. Adult oral health for vulnerable populations matters. Enacting HB 006 is a positive step in that direction.

Thank you for considering our testimony. If I can provide any further information, please contact me at the phone number below or my email, ejoseph@cfes.org

Sincerely,



Erica Joseph
President



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