



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary

February 9, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

### **RE: HB 6 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults – Letter of Opposition**

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of opposition on HB 6 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults.

HB 6 would require Maryland Medicaid to provide comprehensive dental coverage for adults up to 133% of the federal poverty level beginning on January 1, 2023. MDH respectfully opposes this legislation on the basis of fiscal impact. The cost is estimated to be at least \$155.1 million (\$62.1 million State general funds and \$93.1 million in federal funds) per year.

Unlike bills introduced in prior sessions which required basic coverage for dental services, HB 6 calls for comprehensive coverage, resulting in a more substantial fiscal impact. Based on estimates in a February 2016 report by the Hilltop Institute for the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC), MDH anticipates a comprehensive, extensive plan would have a per member per month (PMPM) cost of \$16.88 in 2022 dollars.<sup>1</sup> As of February 2020, there were 745,945 participants enrolled in Medicaid over age 19 who would be newly eligible for dental benefits under the bill.<sup>2</sup> Actual enrollment may be higher which would subsequently increase costs.

Maryland Medicaid currently covers dental services for children under age 21, pregnant women 21 and older, participants 21 and older enrolled in Rare and Expensive Case Management, and former foster care children under age 26, through the Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.mdac.us/file\\_download/inline/fd7f7411-488f-470a-bcb2-3cde211b4151](https://www.mdac.us/file_download/inline/fd7f7411-488f-470a-bcb2-3cde211b4151)

<sup>2</sup> Due to COVID-19, MDH is seeing higher than average Medicaid enrollment. States are currently eligible for an enhanced federal match if they provide continuous eligibility through the end of the month in which the national public health emergency (PHE) ends for those enrolled as of March 18, 2020, or at any time thereafter during the PHE period. For the purposes of this estimate, MDH assumes that the PHE will end prior to the implementation of this bill and that enrollment will return to pre-COVID levels, which is why the February 2020 enrollment numbers are referenced here.

In CY 2019, \$199.7 million was spent on dental through the Healthy Smiles Program. To the extent that any changes would be required to one of these populations' dental packages to align with a new comprehensive adult package, the fiscal impact of HB 6 would increase.

Furthermore, some of Maryland Medicaid's MCOs voluntarily elect to offer limited dental services to their adult participants; Maryland Medicaid does not reimburse the MCOs for these services.

Additionally, in 2021 the General Assembly passed SB 100/HB 368 which created a temporary committee, the Oral Health Task Force. This task force is charged with studying and analyzing the current landscape of oral health services in the State. They are also tasked with making recommendations to improve access to services, especially for our most vulnerable citizens. The task force began its work on July 1, 2021, and is slated to continue for a period of two years. MDH respectfully requests this legislation be revisited after the task force finishes their analysis and provides the legislature with its recommendations.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Heather Shek, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs at (443) 695-4218 or [heather.shek@maryland.gov](mailto:heather.shek@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,



Dennis R. Schrader  
Secretary