

February 9, 2022

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass:

During this pandemic time, we have seen the true ability to make changes that change the health of the entire population. Although, not COVID 19, dental disease has been around much longer resulting in health issues that make it difficult to manage dental pain, control a chronic disease, obtain employment, or even eat, speak, or socialize.

While it's not something most people like to admit, everyone makes judgments of others based on their appearance. It's simply a part of human nature. In many cases, however, certain factors may be more likely to lead others to incorrect judgments or assumptions. Imagine a change in the actual financial well being of a community based on just a smile. Studies have shown that workers who are deemed attractive (ie take care of themselves) have higher confidence and increased wages.

In addition, almost 75 percent of study participants say they are more likely to trust someone who has a nice smile. This is true even when other candidates for the position have good jobs, designer suits and luxury cars.

Finally, it is reported that our children nationally miss about 51 billion school hours a year due to dental disease. Imagine if the guardian of this child also had dental pain AND had to take their child to a dental appointment for the dental pain?

Maryland is just one of three states without adult dental coverage in Medicaid. More than 30 states provide comprehensive or limited adult dental coverage in their Medicaid programs. The remaining states provide some dental coverage to most adults in emergency situations, except for the states of Maryland, Alabama, and Tennessee.

MDAC is seeking support of a bill to expand dental coverage to all adults in Maryland Medicaid. Although dually eligible adults under age 65, pregnant and postpartum people, and young adults who have aged out of foster care have some dental coverage through Maryland Medicaid.

After Deamonte Driver's death, Maryland has done a tremendous job at improving dental access for children. But our state has left behind parents, grandparents, and adult family members. Maryland is just one of three states without adult dental coverage in Maryland. This is

unconscionable. The health of our state depends on the health of the entire family. We need to do better. We need your support. Our families deserve to have to put the worry of unnecessary dental pain out of their minds.

Sincerely,

Jonelle Grant Anamelechi, DDS, MSPH
Owner
Children's Choice Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics
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