



*Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy* *Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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**SB150 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults**

**Hearing Date: 3/30/22**

**Committee: HGO**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 150, which would expand dental coverage to adults at or below 133% of the federal poverty level. We especially thank Senators Augustine and Guzzone for introducing this bill.

Dental care is vital to the overall health and wellbeing of adults. Untreated oral health problems can lead to tooth loss and difficulty eating, resulting in nutrition issues. Untreated oral health problems are also linked with other health problems like oral and throat cancers, diabetes, stroke, heart and lung disease, poor birth outcomes and tooth decay.<sup>i</sup>

About twice as many non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have untreated cavities as non-Hispanic White adults. Also, more than nine in ten older adults have had cavities, and one in six have untreated cavities. Older non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have two to three times the rate of untreated cavities as older non-Hispanic White adults.<sup>ii</sup>

About forty-two percent of low-income adults have difficulty biting and chewing, and twenty-three percent of low-income adults reduce participation in social activities due to the condition of their mouth and teeth. This shapes into mental health problems, which causes anxiety. One in every five adults' experiences anxiety due to the state of their mouth and teeth.<sup>iii</sup>

Thank you again to the Committee for your recognized efforts toward improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders. This bill is essential for Maryland to remain a leader in health care. We urge a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 150.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*

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<sup>i</sup> Hinton, E. & Paradise, J. (2016, March 17). Access to Dental Care in Medicaid: Spotlight on Nonelderly Adults. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/report-section/access-to-dental-care-in-medicaid-spotlight-on-nonelderly-adults-issue-brief>

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Oral Health Surveillance Report: Trends in Dental Caries and Sealants, Tooth Retention, and Edentulism, United States, 1999–2004 to 2011–2016*. US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2019.

<sup>iii</sup> Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States. <https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/us-oral-health-well-being.pdf>