



primary care coalition

making
health care
happen

8757 Georgia Ave.
10th Floor
Silver Spring, MD
20910

T: 301.628.3405
F: 301.608.2384

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Richard C. Bohrer, Chair, External Affairs Committee, Primary Care
Coalition

DATE: March 30, 2022

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT – SB 0150 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program –
Dental Coverage for Adults**

The Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County (PCC), which administers health care safety-net programs in coordination with health centers, hospitals, practitioners, and community nonprofits for some 30,000 low-income county residents, strongly supports passage of SB 150 because it takes an important step forward in addressing the significant oral health needs of Maryland adults.

People with low incomes are more likely than others to lack access to oral health and other services and are more likely to experience negative health and life outcomes as a result. The impact on individuals and society is significant. According to the CDC:

- Over 34 million school hours were lost in the United States in 2008 because of unplanned urgent dental care.
- Over \$45 billion is lost in productivity in the United States each year because of untreated oral disease.
- Nearly 18% of all working-age adults, and 29% of those with lower incomes, report that the appearance of their mouth and teeth affects their ability to interview for a job¹

Maryland Medicaid does not cover dental care for adults meaning that the population currently in need is even greater than the estimates above. A study by the DentaQuest Institute found that in 2016 there were 42,000 emergency room visits in Maryland related to dental care costing \$22 million. The rate of dental related ED visits is 40% higher than the national rate.²

PCC understands the problem only too well because we witness the consequences of lack of access to dental care among the low-income populations we serve.

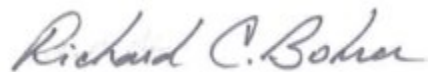
¹ Disparities in Oral Health | Division of Oral Health | CDC. (2021, February 5). https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/oral_health_disparities/index.htm

² Baltimore Sun, August 22, 2019 <https://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-maryland-dental-pilot-program-20190822-imqsqrsls5gv3df6dqd2sr6tqe-story.html>

Montgomery Cares – a public-private partnership administered by PCC – operates dental health centers at the Catholic Charities Montgomery County Dental Program and Muslim Community Center. But demand greatly outstrips capacity: in FY 2021, we were able to provide affordable dental care to just 1,437 Montgomery Care patients, many of whom had to wait weeks or months for an appointment, out of a total population of more than 19,777. In the first half of FY 2022 alone, the Montgomery Cares Oral Health Program served 1,325 patients through 2,820 encounters. Dental health centers at two federally qualified health centers in Montgomery County provide services on a sliding fee schedule, but these, too, lack sufficient capacity to meet the need for services.

For this reason, PCC supports SB 150 and the inclusion of comprehensive dental coverage in Maryland Medicaid, thereby reducing the number of people reliant on the locally funded oral health safety net while also addressing the long overlooked oral health needs of all Maryland adults. Thank you for considering our testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard C. Bohrer".

Richard C. Bohrer
Chair, External Affairs Committee
Primary Care Coalition