

My written testimony supports House Bill 1082: Consumer Health Information Hub and Requirements.

My name is María Teresa Canto. I am a licensed dentist in the State of Maryland and a Diplomatic of the American Board of Dental Public Health. I reside in Montgomery County (6 Manor Spring Ct, Silver Spring, MD 20906).

The mission of the University of Maryland (UMD) Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy (Center) is to advance health literacy in Maryland and the nation. This bill supports providing state and local governments agencies, health systems, nonprofit and community-based organization with health literacy expertise and resources. With this legislation Maryland will set a national standard by removing health literacy barriers and advancing health justice.

In my work related experience addressing health literacy is crucial to reduce health inequalities in the US. Activities of the Center include establishing and promoting the use of plain language and identification of health literacy barriers to improve the provision of health services for underserved populations. In addition, the Center will monitor and report annually to the Maryland General Assembly on the findings of what works for different populations/communities and how it impacts health literacy related activities.

As an oral health provider, it is crucial to promote effective communications with patients so they can follow their treatment plan to improve health outcomes and reduce health costs. In a larger scale, it is critical that the health care professional and government agencies communicate effectively with the public, patient, and caregivers. The importance of clear communication has been highlighted in the last two years during the COVID-19 epidemic. Lack of clear targeted messages created a lot of confusion among providers and the public.

As an oral health provider HB 1082 will directly impact my work because it will provide: 1) professional resources and tools to address the specific needs of patients, and 2) training and professional development opportunities to better communicate with patients and other health services providers.

My vision and the Center's vision align because improved health outcomes and health justice are dependent of a world where everyone has understandable, useful information and services to make informed decision about their health.