

**Testimony before House Health and Government Operations Committee
Support
HB 6 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage for Adults
February 9, 2022**

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports House Bill 6. Because Social Workers provide services in such a verity of different areas, we see the impact a lack of dental care has on so many Marylanders. This bill will bring Maryland in line with nearly every other state and ensure that adults in Maryland have access to dental care.ⁱ

NASW supports Medicaid dental coverage because there is a strong correlation between oral health and behavioral health, including conditions such as depression.ⁱⁱ In a white paper on the integration of oral and behavioral health, national policy analysts noted that, “poor oral health can create or exacerbate problems with mental health, self-esteem, cognitive health, substance use and impede social functioning in areas such as employability and school engagement”

As Maryland continues to work to improve access to behavioral health, we should not leave dental care behind. Oral health and behavioral health are both part of overall health National Association of Social Workers-Maryland Chapter requests a favorable report for HB 6. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW-C Executive Director, NASW MD (mdemartino.naswmd@socialworkers.org).

ⁱ https://www.chcs.org/media/Adult-Oral-Health-Fact-Sheet_091519.pdf

ⁱⁱ O’Neil A, Berk M, Venugopal K, Kim SW, Williams LJ, Jacka FN. The association between poor dental health and depression: findings from a large-scale, population-based study (the NHANES study). *Gen Hosp Psychiatry*. 2014 May-Jun;36(3):266-70.