

HB 6 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage for Adults

Health and Government Operations

February 9, 2022

Position: In Favor

I am writing in support of House Bill 6. Dental coverage should be available to all adults, including adults insured with Medicaid. My 27 year old brother, Cody Nichols, had little income and was insured by Maryland Medicaid. In December of 2016, Cody had been in recovery for almost 3 years. He had a sore tooth that had progressively worsened, but he couldn't obtain an appointment to see a dentist. Most of the dental offices he contacted would not see him based on his Medicaid insurance and his inability to pay out of pocket. The one dental office that agreed to see him, stated they would not be available until January 2017. Knowing that he had to wait until January and in extreme pain, he reached out to friends seeking pain medication.

Cody finally saw the dentist on January 5, 2017. The dentist told him he had multiple abscessed teeth but that she would not be able to assist him in extracting the teeth. She prescribed him ibuprofen and referred him to a specialist. The specialist she referred him to, as well as the other specialists Cody contacted, did not accept Medicaid. January 8, 2017, in unbearable pain, Cody reached out to a known drug dealer and asked for something stronger than ibuprofen. That night my parents found him in his bedroom, he had passed away from a Fentanyl overdose.

Obviously, we can't state for fact that he relapsed due to the tooth pain, but we do know that had he been able to see a dentist that could have extracted the diseased teeth and relieved the pain, he wouldn't have reached out to the drug dealer on January 8. For this reason, I urge a favorable vote on House Bill 6.

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