



WCHC

WE CREATE
HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass,

West Cecil Health Center supports House Bill 6, Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage for Adults. This bill will provide comprehensive coverage for Marylanders to receive basic preventative and restorative dental care. Maryland is one of only three states without adult dental coverage in Medicaid, and this bill could improve, and even save, the lives of Marylanders.

At West Cecil Health Center, we provide dental care for uninsured and underinsured patients in Cecil and Harford Counties and surroundings areas. As frontline workers, we see the ramifications of the lack of dental coverage for Maryland adults. Several times per week, we see a patient who has already been to the emergency room or urgent care because of tooth pain and/or facial swelling. These patients should be going directly to a dentist, but their lack of insurance precludes them. Several times per week, we see patients choosing to extract a restorable tooth because (a) they cannot afford alternative treatment and (b) they did not have dental coverage to address the cavity before it reached the nerve of the tooth. Far too often we see patients who state they once had beautiful teeth and routine dental care, but after losing their job or being injured, they lost their benefits and have been unable to see a dentist. Now these patients need full mouth extractions and dentures. Did you know dentures only provide about 15% efficiency as compared to our natural teeth? If Maryland Medicaid offered comprehensive dental coverage to these adults, preventative dentistry could help us avoid these situations.

Thankfully, Maryland Medicaid does offer *some* dental coverage for those adults dually eligible under age 65, pregnant and postpartum people, and young adults who have aged out of foster care. We have improved lives for these subgroups. Unfortunately, far too many adults do not have dental coverage, resulting in oral health issues that make it difficult to manage dental pain, control a chronic disease, obtain employment, eat, speak, or socialize. At West Cecil Health Center, we treat many adults in recovery, and to have their teeth restored would allow them to obtain employment and improve their mental health. At West Cecil Health Center, we treat many adults with chronic diseases, and to improve their oral health would help manage their diabetes and heart disease. Comprehensive dental coverage for adults with Medicaid will most certainly improve the lives of Marylanders.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information please contact John Ness, CEO at jness@westcecilhealth.org or Emily Davis, Dental Director at edavis1@westcecilhealth.org.

Sincerely,

John Ness, President and CEO
West Cecil Health Center, Inc.

49 Rock Springs Road
P.O. Box 99
Conowingo, MD 21918

253 Lewis Lane
Suite 202
Havre de Grace, MD 21078