



House Health & Government Operations Committee

February 9, 2022

Support of House Bill 6

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) urges a favorable opinion on HB 6.

MATOD represents over 65 healthcare organizations across Maryland that provide and promote high-quality, effective medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, psychologists, peer recovery specialists and office personnel who dedicate every day to saving lives. MATOD programs serve over 35,000 Marylanders enrolled in opioid treatment programs (OTPs) receiving methadone and buprenorphine, in conjunction with counseling and other medical services.

Our programs provide many resources to our patients, but the one thing we cannot assist our patients in accessing is dental care. There are long waits and fees for those who choose to use the few resources out there, such as the University of Maryland Dental School and federally qualified health centers, that try to offer some dental care. Those of us who interact with people affected by substance use disorders (SUDs) are very well aware that addiction goes hand in hand with dental problems. These problems cause chronic and acute pain, infection, and social embarrassment. Dental pain can be a factor in relapse to illicit substances when patients feel the need to self-medicate. The embarrassment of missing and/or discolored teeth often causes lack of confidence in re-establishing relationships with others and can limit the desire for participation in self-help groups that may be a valuable aid in their recovery.

Dental care is health care. We know this. The results of poor oral health, including bad breath and missing, or discolored/rotten teeth, can at the very minimum reduce a person's confidence. It can also affect employment prospects. And on a larger scale, poor oral health affects one's well-being. Dental problems can cause chronic headaches, diabetes, and heart problems. It is not logical that medical insurance plans do not cover the mouth. Good oral health prevents other poor health outcomes which saves money, and in some cases, saves lives.

MATOD urges the Senate to prioritize the inclusion of dental services as basic and necessary medical care in the Maryland Medicaid program. Please support HB 6.

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MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.