

Tri-County Health Planning Board
Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester County
Local Health Improvement Coalitions

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Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Chair Pendergrass:

The Tri County Health Planning Board of Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties supports SB150/HB0006 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage for Adults. Access to routine oral health care is a critical part of a person's overall health status and it is time for Maryland Medicaid to include dental coverage for all adult Medicaid beneficiaries. Maryland is only one of three states - Maryland, Alabama and Tennessee - that does not provide some level of adult dental coverage for adults enrolled in Medicaid.

Every year, thousands of adults enrolled in Medicaid seek "oral health care" from Maryland hospital emergency departments because they do not have coverage for and access to dental care. Emergency departments do not have the capability to treat underlying dental issues, and can only provide temporary, palliative care.

Not only does providing dental care for adults enrolled in Medicaid have important implications for improving a Medicaid enrollee's overall health status, but it also makes sound financial sense. Dollars currently spent to provide only temporary relief from dental pain can help fund a benefit structure that provides actual dental treatment.

The Tri County Health Planning Board represents dozens of providers, service agencies and community members across Maryland's Lower Shore region. We urge a favorable vote on Senate Bill 150 by the Senate Finance Committee and hope to enter a new era of comprehensive health care for all adults enrolled in Medicaid.

Sincerely,


