



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 6

Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 9, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

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Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 6, which would create an adult dental benefit in Maryland Medicaid. The lack of Medicaid coverage for dental care has been a huge barrier to overall health and health care for vulnerable individuals and families in Maryland. As such, MAP fully supports this bill.

February marks 15 years since the death of 12-year-old Marylander Deamonte Driver. His death made national headlines because he was a child who died of a toothache. And he died of a toothache because his family was poor, in and out of homelessness and uninsured, and could not access dental care. Despite improved access to dental care for young people under Medicaid expansion and a limited adult dental pilot program, very few adults in Maryland have dental care covered by Medicaid today in Maryland. Far too many adults do not, resulting in oral health issues that make it difficult to manage dental pain, control a chronic disease, obtain employment, or even eat, speak, or socialize. And without adult dental coverage under Medicaid in Maryland, access to this lifesaving resource will remain out of reach for so many like Deamonte Driver.

Maryland is just one of three states without adult dental coverage in Medicaid and Maryland is behind almost every other state in dental coverage in Medicaid. Over thirty other states provide comprehensive or limited adult dental coverage in their programs. The remaining states provide some dental coverage to most adults in emergency situations, except for the states of Maryland, Alabama, and Tennessee.

It is time for Maryland Medicaid to provide full adult dental coverage.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 6.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.