

To: Mister Chairman and the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB771 will recommend that all children receive a dental evaluation before starting school in the state of Maryland. It is currently required in ONLY 4 jurisdictions in the state.

Since dental caries (cavities) is the most common disease of childhood, we must do our part to help children get proper treatment and prevention. Half of all children in elementary school have cavities. These cavities can often cause pain, infection and may result in difficulty chewing and eating. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 51 million of hours of school are lost because of these dental problems.

As a Pediatric Dentist, I must advocate for children's dental health. I have seen, firsthand, the problems untreated decay can cause. Pediatric Dentists promote evidence-based policies and best practices. The evidence clearly supports early childhood dental treatment will last a lifetime.

While the current recommendation for the first dental visit is AGE 1, this recommendation of a visit when starting school, through the school system, will help parents understand the importance of dental health. When children begin school, they are currently required to have a medical evaluation. It should also be required for them to have a dental evaluation. The mouth is the first part of overall health.

Please support this bill HB771. It is the first step in making sure our youngest patients are taken care of and will help them avoid painful problems. It is not their fault that their parents often do not know any better.

Thank you for your time,

Dr. Shari Kohn

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