



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1143 – Dental Hygienists in Schools and School-Based Health Centers and the Maryland Collaborative to Improve Children’s Oral Health Through School-Based Health Programs

Hearing Date: March 7, 2025

Position: Support

The Maryland Assembly of School-Based Healthcare (MASBHC) strongly supports *House Bill 1143 - Dental Hygienists in Schools and School-Based Health Centers and the Maryland Collaborative to Improve Children’s Oral Health Through School-Based Health Programs*. The bill establishes an interdisciplinary collaborative to determine how school-based dental programs can improve access to dental services for children.

MASBHC is deeply concerned about declining access to dental services for children. The % of children accessing preventative dental services under Medicaid peaked at about 64% in 2016. While access to dental services for all individuals declined during the pandemic, we have not seen sufficient improvement for children. In 2023, only 57% of children in Medicaid received preventative dental services.ⁱ

MASBHC believes that school-based dental programs are essential to improving the oral health of children. There are a wide range of programs which could provide critical preventative dental services and linkages to permanent dental homes. We need a coordinated statewide approach to support local jurisdictions in implementing programs best-suited for their communities. The Collaborative established by this legislation will provide the roadmap for the State’s work.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/Documents/JCRs/2020/dentalJCRfinal11-20.pdf>
<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth/Documents/2024AnnualOralHealthJCR.pdf>