



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 15

DATE: January 28, 2020

SPONSOR: Delegate Harrison

ASSIGNED TO: Ways and Means

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey

(leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT (Department of Health and Human Services)

Public Schools – Student Health – Certificate of Dental Health

House Bill 15 would require, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, each student enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in the State to submit to the school a certificate of dental health on a schedule to be determined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and for MSDE to consult with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish standards for periodic dental examinations.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services recognizes the laudable intent of the bill as an effort to improve dental health among Maryland's school children. However, as written, the bill poses the likelihood of an unfunded mandate and a further extension of the already stretched resources of the school health nurses in the County's public schools.

The lack of specificity in the bill could likely result in MSDE designating the school health nurses in schools across the State as the recordkeepers of the certificates of dental health, and could further task school health nurses with identifying children in need of dental treatment, follow-up communications with parents, management of waivers, and other administrative tasks. School health nurses have had several resource-intensive, unfunded mandates on their time and resources in the last few years, including providing diabetes and sickle cell disease case management during all school-time and increased numbers of mandated vision screenings, among others.

Further, the bill does not specify that MSDE nor MDH establish standards for how and from whom parents should seek the recommended dental care for their children, and the County's dental clinics currently do not have staffing or infrastructure capacity that would be needed if even a small percentage of students sought care. This would result in the school health nurses potentially being required to refer children to private providers who would be unrestricted from raising the prices of the examinations that parents could potentially misunderstand as being required in order to attend school rather than a recommended certificate.

For these reasons, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services requests that the bill be amended to either: exempt school health nurses from the requirements of the bill or include a funding source so that the mandates in the bill will not have to be met by utilizing County funding.