

## Written Testimony for Maryland House Bill 15

“Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health”

My name is Dr. Edward Chappelle. I have been practicing general dentistry in the state of Maryland since 1982. I maintain a private practice in Bowie, Maryland. I am a member of the National Dental Association (Past president 2013), the Robert T. Freeman Dental Society (Past president 1999, 2000), the Academy of General Dentistry (Fellow 1996), the American College of Dentists (Fellow 2014), the American Dental Association, and the former Dentist in Action Committee who helped to start the Deamonte Driver Project.

I have been asked to give testimony on MD House Bill 15 (HB 15) sponsored by Delegate Andrea Harrison, “Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health”

Dental/ oral health is essential to overall health. We know from the research that many diseases and other maladies can be detected in the oral cavity. Dental caries is the number one health issue in children, and it is entirely preventable. While we know we cannot completely eradicate the disease at this time, we do know, that early detection and treatment (fillings) can prevent needless pain and suffering. It has been researched and documented that in the U.S., children miss over 34 million hours or 9 million days of school from unscheduled or emergency dental issues.

Maryland over the last 12 years has become a leader in children’s oral health, prompted by the death of a 12-year-old boy named Deamonte Driver. An increase in awareness of the problem, an increase in screenings, and the backing of the Maryland State Dept. of Health have led to this improvement. In fact, the Pew Charitable trust has rated the state of Maryland an A, when compared to other states for its commitment and programs to improve children’s oral health.

As an oral health professional for more than 40 years, I understand we can do more. More means we can be up front with prevention, by making it mandatory to have a dental health checkup before starting the school year. Problems caught

early, can have a profound affect on not only pain and suffering, but the financial aspect of treatment. An ounce of prevention is certainly worth a pound of cure.

The other aspect of this, is educating the parents and the children as to the importance of maintaining good oral health. An early visit to the dentist can provide information on proper toothbrushing, the value of fluoride varnish, proper nutrition, and protection of the teeth during sporting activities. As children mature, they are more likely to have better habits, and less fear of taking care of their oral health.

Respectfully Submitted,

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