

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health (HB 15)**

January 28, 2020

OPPOSE

Maryland PTA is the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. For nearly 105 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Maryland PTA submits this testimony opposing House Bill 15 ("HB 15"). HB 15 would, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year:

- require each student enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in the State to submit a certificate of dental health to the school on a schedule established by the State Department of Education ("MSDE"), and
- require MSDE, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, to adopt regulations establishing standards for periodic dental examinations, and to develop a standard form for a certificate of dental health.

The public health policy of HB 15 is unclear. We understand twelve (12) states have enacted similar laws, and a common rationale for the state laws is to identify children in need of care so that parents can be made aware of the need for treatment. However, there is no scientific evidence that dental screening laws lead to improvements in health of children.¹ The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry confirmed that data is not available to determine the effectiveness of encouraging school-entry dental examinations.²

Maryland PTA is concerned about the cost of enacting HB 15. Complying with HB 15 would be a challenge for low-income families, who might not have affordable options. The risk that children might

¹ Milsom K.M., Tickle M., and Blinkhorn A.S. (2008). Is School Dental Screening a Political or a Scientific Intervention? *Journal of Dental Research*, 87(10), 896-899.

Milsom K., Blinkhorn A., Worthington H., et al. (2006). The Effectiveness of School Dental Screening: a Cluster-randomized Control Trial. *Journal of Dental Research*, 85(10), 924-928.

² American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Council on Clinical Affairs. (2008). Policy on Mandatory School-entrance Oral Health Examinations. Available at: http://www.aapd.org/media/Policies_Guidelines/P_SchoolExms.pdf.

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be denied entry into school for lack of a dental health certificate is too high, and denying children the constitutional right to an education based on a law with no identified purpose or benefit is unconscionable. HB 15 creates a regulatory burden on MSDE and other state agencies with no provisions for payment for health screenings, data collection, supervision, or enforcement. Additionally, it is unclear what schools would do with the dental health certificates collected. Because HB 15 has no stated purpose, the long- and short-term costs and benefits are unidentifiable.

Maryland PTA believes dental health contributes to the overall health of children. However, as drafted, the burden of HB 15 outweighs the any potential benefit, and therefore, it should not be enacted.

Respectfully Submitted,



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President