



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 3, 2021

Senate Bill 100 Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 100 Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland.

MRHA supports this legislation that establishes the creation of this task force that would analyze current access to dental services in the State, with a focus on residents affected by poverty, disabilities, or aging; identify barriers to accessing dental services; identify areas of the State where a significant number of residents are not receiving oral health care services, among other key activities.

Rural Marylanders across the state suffer from lack of accessible and quality oral health and dental services. This legislation would provide data driven solutions to increasing dental services to underserved rural communities and would allow funding programs to consider these solutions for implementation. Diverse and data driven solutions are desperately needed in rural Maryland to provide equitable oral health and dental services.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland. Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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