



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

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SUPPORT

HOUSE BILL 368 - TASK FORCE ON ORAL HEALTH IN MARYLAND

House Health and Government Operations Committee

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Oral health is a **critical** component of overall health. While Maryland has made much progress in the last decade to improve the oral health status of its residents, access problems remain for poor and vulnerable populations. Not surprisingly, the lack of access to dental care disproportionately impacts low-income women and children who rely on Medicaid to pay for their oral health care. For children, poor dental health can lead to lifelong medical problems and inhibit their ability to learn or attend school. Untreated tooth decay and gum disease can also lead to mouth pain, tooth loss, heart disease, diabetes, and dementia.

The Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc. supports the creation of a Task Force to study access to oral health care in Maryland, including:

- an analysis of current access to dental services in the state;
- identifying those areas of the state where residents encounter barriers to receiving oral health care services;
- analyzing what those barriers are and the impact of such barriers on population health;
- assessing a range of policy options and solutions to eliminate or reduce the barriers and to make recommendations for increasing access to dental services in the state.

The proposed task force brings together representatives from all of the relevant state agencies, as well as a diverse group of expert stakeholders and advocates. The task force will provide an opportunity to reach a consensus on a multi-faceted set of proposals and strategies that will have the potential to expand the capacity of the oral health care delivery system for underserved low-income and vulnerable populations.

The Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, Inc. urges the committee to issue a favorable report on HB368.

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