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Committee: House Health and Governmental Affairs Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 78 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2011)

Hearing Date: January 26, 2021

Position: Support

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) supports *House Bill 78 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act)*. MDAC strongly supports prioritizing health equity issues, as there is stark evidence of the impact of inequities in oral health. For example, the rate of untreated tooth decay among children age 2 to 9 points to wide gaps for Black and brown communities: 67.9% for non-Hispanic Black children, 70.5% for Mexican American children, and 57.2 % for non-Hispanic white children.ⁱ This statistic demonstrates why MDAC supports the following legislative package:

- **House Bill 78 – Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Health Equity Act of 2021):** The bill supports the State’s efforts to address social determinants of health. Almost all State agencies would have seats on the Maryland Commission on Health Equity. The Commission would create a mechanism to infuse policies in all arenas, from transportation to housing, with a health equity perspective.
- **House Bill 28 – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity:** The bill requires all health care practitioners, including dental providers, to receive implicit bias training. Implicit bias training is an important strategy in addressing systemic racism in our health care system. The bill also requires the State to make an investment in addressing health equity by mandating funding for the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders

- **House Bill 309 – Public Health – Data – Race and Ethnicity Information:** Policymakers need consistent and robust data to develop programs to address health equity. The bill would require the State to focus on the collection and dissemination of data on race and ethnicity.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

ⁱ Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2020.
<https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-10/hck1ocv.%40www.surgeon.fullrpt.pdf>