



American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc.
655 15th St. NW, Suite 503
Washington, D.C. 20005
fightcancer.org/md

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SUPPORT OF SB 150 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

930 Marylanders are expected to be diagnosed with oral cavity and pharynx cancer in 2022, and an estimated 220 Marylanders will die from the disease.¹ Providing individuals access to affordable, comprehensive health care and dental care is essential to detecting, treating and surviving cancer. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) supports public policy proposals such as **SB 150 Maryland Medical Assistance Program— Dental Coverage for Adults** aimed at expanding Medicaid eligibility for low-income parents and adults.

There's no routine screening test or program for oral cavity and oropharyngeal cancers. Still, many pre-cancers and cancers in these areas can be found early (when they're small) during routine oral exams by a dentist, doctor, dental hygienist, or by self-exam.

Some dentists and doctors recommend that you look at your mouth in a mirror every month to check for any changes, like white patches (leukoplakia), sores, or lumps.² This is especially important if you use or have used tobacco, and/or if you routinely drink alcohol, as these put you at much higher risk for these cancers.

Regular dental check-ups that include an exam of the entire mouth are important in finding oral and oropharyngeal cancers (and pre-cancers) early.

Expanding Medicaid coverage to dental care will promote earlier cancer detection, fewer deaths and improved outcome for patients. Studies show that, individuals enrolled in Medicaid prior to their cancer diagnosis have better survival rates than those who enroll after their diagnosis.³ The health and dental coverage provided by Medicaid helps to improve outcomes and reduce the burden of cancer by offering access to prevention services; timely cancer screening and early detection services; as well as affordable treatment services and care.^{4 5 6}

¹ American Cancer Society. "American Cancer Society: Cancer Facts & Statistics." *American Cancer Society | Cancer Facts & Statistics - Maryland*, 14 Jan. 2022, <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/#/state/Maryland>.

² "What Are Oral Cavity and Oropharyngeal Cancers?" *American Cancer Society*, <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/oral-cavity-and-oropharyngeal-cancer/about/what-is-oral-cavity-cancer.html>. March 23, 2021.

³ Adams E, Chien LN, Florence CS, et al. The Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act in Georgia: effects on time to Medicaid enrollment. *Cancer*. (2009); 115(6):1300-9.

⁴ Aparna Soni, Kosali Simon, John Cawley, Lindsay Sabik, "Effect of Medicaid Expansions of 2014 on Overall and Early-Stage Cancer Diagnoses", *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 2 (February 1, 2018): pp. 216-218.

⁵ Dehkordy, SF, Hall, K, West, B, et al. "Medicaid Expansion Improves Breast Cancer Screening for Low Income Women." November 30, 2015. https://www2.rnsa.org/timssnet/Media/pressreleases/14_pr_target.cfm?id=1849

⁶ Ungar, Laura. "More KY Medicaid Patients Get Preventative Care." *Courier Journal*. August 7, 2015. Web www.courier-journal.com/story/life/wellness/2015/08/05/preventive-care-rises-among-kentucky-medicaid-patients/31190973



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Dental and health insurance coverage makes it easier to work, find a new job, pay for basic needs and succeed in today's economy. Having access to health insurance is a matter of life or death for countless cancer patients, survivors and

Marylanders facing a cancer diagnosis. Ensuring that low-income individuals and families have access to comprehensive, affordable health care and dental coverage is one of the most critical ways lawmakers can successfully reduce cancer incidence and mortality in this country.

ACS CAN asks the committee for a favorable report on SB 150.

Sincerely,

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