

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 237: PUBLIC HEALTH—DENTAL SERVICES--ACCESS

DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2023

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of nearly 40 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland provides this letter of information regarding Senate Bill 237, which would increase access to dental care for children throughout Maryland while at the same time requiring parents to provide periodic evidence of dental screening to their child's school or child care center.

Senate Bill 237 could potentially have the unintended consequence of causing some children to be excluded from school or child care:

- 1) **Children with disabilities:** Some children with disabilities have significant sensory or behavior challenges that make them unable to tolerate routine dental care. These children may require sedation for routine dental care, making dental screening an onerous and major medical procedure. Some children have a constellation of disabilities that makes sedation unsafe. Additionally, many parents of children with disabilities have great difficulty finding dentists who are willing to treat their children. If dental screening is a prerequisite for school or child care attendance, these children—children who need special education and related services and are guaranteed those services by law—would be excluded from school.
- 2) **Children whose legal status makes them ineligible for Medical Assistance:** All children, regardless of their legal status, have a right to attend school. However, some children may not be at a point in the immigration process at which they have access to Medicaid. House Bill 290 presupposes that children will be eligible for Medicaid or otherwise have dental insurance. If children are unable to access a dental screening because they do not have dental insurance or Medicaid, they will be excluded from school if dental screening is a prerequisite for school attendance.
- 3) Both of these issues could be addressed by an amendment stating that children cannot be excluded from school if they are unable to access dental screening because of disability or lack of insurance.

Please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 410-370-5730 with any questions. (Over)

Respectfully submitted,

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