



Maryland Community Health System

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 255 – Public Health – Dental Services - Access

Hearing Date: February 14, 2023

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Community Health System (MCHS) supports *Senate Bill 255 – Public Health – Dental Services – Access* with amendments. The bill delineates key recommendations of the Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland.

MCHS is a network of federally qualified health centers that focus on providing somatic, behavioral, and oral health services to underserved communities. We appreciate the strong partnership of the Maryland General Assembly in expanding access to dental coverage. With *SB 150 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults* from the 2022 session, the Maryland Medicaid Program has been able to extend dental coverage to 800,000 more adults.

Senate Bill 255 provides for further steps to improve access to dental services. We request consideration of two amendments:

- **Study of required reports of dental screenings for children in public schools and child care center programs:** The bill requires parents to report dental screenings at regular intervals to a child’s school or child care center. Rather than implement this provision, we request an amendment to require the Department to convene stakeholders and study the issue further. We are concerned that the provider community may not have the capacity to support implementation of the proposed requirement, so more consideration is needed.
- **Operating Grants for Community Health Centers:** The bill has several provisions to address building provider capacity among the private practice community. We request adding a provision to require funding for operating grants for community health centers under the Office of Oral Health. Community health centers are critical partners in providing services to Medicaid participants.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.