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March 3, 2023

The Honorable Delegate Nicholas R. Kipke  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
Anne Arundel County, District 31  
165 Lowe House Office Building | 6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Adult and Pediatric Dental Services  
Review of Reimbursement Rates – House Bill 1146

Dear Delegate Kipke,

It is with much gratitude that I offer you, your cosponsors and the Health and Government Operations Committee this written testimony for the introduction of House Bill 1146. This legislation is long overdue and could favorably impact the recruitment and retention of dentists and other health care providers that are desperately needed throughout our state. It will help to improve access to health care for our children and families.

Today, financial equity for dentists is far too important a part of the health care equation to be shortchanged by our state partners. This is especially true now with the expansion of the adult dental services. However, we need more access to oral health care services in both our adult and pediatric patient populations.

Health professionals who willingly take care of oral disease and willingly accept Maryland Medicaid are vital to our health care infrastructure and cannot be taken for granted by stakeholders. There is much agreement that reimbursement rates must be sufficient to retain dedicated dentists to ensure access to care for Program recipients. HB 1146 is the correct appeal on behalf of the dental professionals who provide essential health care to Marylanders while accepting reduced compensation.

While so many dentists are passionate about patient care and roll up our sleeves every day in the face of disease, and viruses, and trauma, it does not mean we can afford to stay this course without proper compensation. All too often Medicaid providers take care of those Marylanders with extreme medical fragility. Patients with the highest rates of mental health illness, lead poisoning, diabetes; those with asthma and other respiratory illnesses to name just some of the maladies we confront day after day, that frequently complicate necessary dental treatment. Care for these members often requires more involved oral health treatment and consequently the expenditure of more time and resources.

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In fact, many have gone as far as to subsidize health care services, products, and medications for the patients in their care. Though health providers sometime receive free products sample from companies to give to patients, dentists often purchase additional resources to supplement and maintain patient care. Effective toothbrushes, for example are not inexpensive. It is important for me as a pediatric dentist, who welcomes many infants and toddler's patients to have an availability of disposal diapers. This too is an additional uncompensated expense. A tax cab or Lyft for a mother and child to and or from a dental appointment is not an unfamiliar business expense sometime personally assumed by the health practitioners.

HB 1146 is the contemporary guidance necessary to help weigh the principles of financial equity for our dental providers. It supports the Hippocratic Oath we take and the obligation we assume to ensure meaningful health care for patients. It is a wise precedent to establish this relief to strengthen dental treatment. This is invaluable support for both those on the side of providing oral health care, and for the recipients of our Maryland Medicaid program.

I am proud that you and the HGO Committee will help those who control our health care reimbursement, to better appreciate the multifactorial impact of this *dollar and sense* legislation. I appeal to our entire HGO Committee and our entire Generally Assembly to better unite us to heal by providing a favorable report for HB 1146.

Sincerely,

*Winifred J. Booker*

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Pediatric Dentist  
President | Maryland State Dental Association  
CEO & Director of Development | The Children's Oral Health Institute

cc: Health and Government Operations Committee