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HB0970

March 7, 2023

TO: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 970– Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Hospitals – Dental Services

POSITION: Support With Amendment

Chair Peña -Melyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with an amendment** House Bill (HB) 970.

HB 970 will require acute care hospitals that participate in Maryland Medicaid to provide an annual plan to provide operating room access for medically necessary dental care for adults with disabilities and children. This will increase access to dental services for these populations.

Denial of access to hospital operating rooms for dental care is a growing problem in Baltimore City. According to a report by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, Pediatric Oral Health Research and Policy Center, medical surgery procedures are reimbursed at better rates than dental procedures, and often displace dental cases from being scheduled in many hospitals.¹ However, the report contends that “the impact of operating room access adults with disabilities and children is significant” (Keels et al., 2021, p. 2). It can be difficult to assess pain in adults with disabilities and young children, meaning that operating room and anesthesia access for dental procedures can be particularly important for these groups.^{2,3} Delaying treatment of tooth decay results in greater likelihood of emergency department visits and medical complications.¹ Chronic pain can impact people's quality of life, interfering with sleep, eating, the ability to concentrate in school, and

¹ Keels MA, Vo A, Casamassimo PS, Litch CS, Wright R (eds). (2021). Denial of Access to Operating Room Time in Hospitals for Pediatric Dental Care. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, Pediatric Oral Health Research and Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.aapd.org/globalassets/media/advocacy/ord.pdf>

² Breau, L. and Burkitt, C. (2009). Assessing Pain in Children with Intellectual Disabilities. *Pain Research and Management*, vol. 14, Article ID 642352. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2009/642352>

³ Ramazani N. (2016). Different Aspects of General Anesthesia in Pediatric Dentistry: A Review. *Iranian journal of pediatrics*, 26(2), e2613. <https://doi.org/10.5812/ijp.2613>

overall functioning.⁴ Addressing oral health early and in the proper setting for an individual's needs (such as an operating room) is an important intervention for maintaining overall quality of life.

A survey from the Maryland State Dental Association found that at least 2,000 children are currently waiting for an operating room appointment.⁵ Maryland's Task Force on Oral Health, as required by House Bill 368 and Senate Bill 100 of 2021, prepared a report on the state of oral health in Maryland. The task force found that "barriers to treating children under general anesthesia in hospitals [include] anesthesia reimbursement rates under Medicaid and the availability of operating room time in hospitals, which leads to long wait times for patients" (Task Force on Oral Health, 2022, p. 19). Continued advocacy for access must be a priority.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable with amendment** report on HB 970. Requiring specific hospitals to maintain annual plans to provide OR time to address the debilitating effects of poor oral health in these vulnerable residents will demonstrate the state's commitment to having a thriving and healthy community.

We respectfully recommend the following amendment: on page 3, line A(3), strike "Dental services for the community served by the hospital." We recommend this amendment to allow more hospital access for those needing operating room care the most: adults with disabilities and children.

⁴ Gold, J. I., Mahrer, N. E., Yee, J., & Palermo, T. M. (2009). Pain, fatigue, and health-related quality of life in children and adolescents with chronic pain. *The Clinical journal of pain*, 25(5), 407–412.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/AJP.0b013e318192bfb1>

⁵ Hughes, D.R. (2023). Personal communication