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Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: HB 970 – Maryland Medical Assistance Programs – Dental Services

Hearing Date: March 6, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) supports *House Bill 970 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Hospitals- Dental Services*. The bill advances a public health approach to addressing the chronic problem of a shortage of operating room capacity for pediatric dental cases.

This issue affects thousands of Maryland children and their families. Children, as well as adults with certain disabilities, who need multiple dental procedures may need to be sedated in order to be treated. This means that dental treatment must be provided in an ambulatory surgery center or hospital operating room. However, many facilities have reduced the amount of time that operating rooms are available for dental cases. This past fall, there was a crisis when a large hospital eliminated blocked operating room time for dental cases.

MDAC has recommended that the Department of Health conduct a needs and capacity assessment for operating room capacity for dental cases by region. We believe the solution to operating room capacity must be tailored to each region. In some areas, ambulatory surgery centers may be a viable alternative, while in other areas these facilities may not exist or may be focused solely on a specific type of surgery, such as orthopedics.

MDAC believes HB 970 will support the Department’s work in evaluating operating room capacity for dental across the state and support regional solutions to the problems. The data collected under the HB 970 reporting requirement will help the Department to annually update its assessment. Health care capacity in any setting, including operating rooms, is not static.

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any assistance, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders