

**Testimony in support of HB 290: Public Health – Dental Services - Access
Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 14, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. My name is Dr. Mark Reynolds, and I serve as Dean of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. Over the last year, I served as co-chair of the Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland. The Task Force was established during the 2021 Legislative Session, by passage of House Bill 368 and Senate Bill 100 to:

- Conduct a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessment of oral health care in the State, including access to care and other systemic limitations to receiving dental services;
- Inform strategies to improve access to care; and,
- Make recommendations to address current and emerging oral health challenges.

I am pleased to share that the Oral Health Task Force submitted its final report to the Governor on December 1, 2022. As co-chair of the Task Force, I want to extend my strong support of House Bill 290, which aligns closely with recommendations found in the report.

Among the most consequential recommendations proposed by the task force relative to pediatric dentistry is the implementation of statewide mandatory dental screenings for children at ages 1,3, 6, 9 and 12 as a requirement to enter childcare or a public school. Equally aligned components of the bill include increased public education on the importance of oral health for children and adults, addressing Medicaid reimbursable procedures and services, and expanding the Maryland Dent-Care Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include dental hygienists, among others.

While Maryland has made much progress in the last decade to improve the oral health status of its residents, access to care remains a significant concern. Oral health is a critical component of overall health, and sustainable strategies to improve access to oral health care are imperative. We at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry are excited to continue our work to advance oral health and improve the quality of life in Maryland communities, particularly those most vulnerable.

Thank you for your consideration.