



## **The Maryland State Dental Association Supports SB 600 -Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Services – Coverage and Rate Study**

*Submitted by Daniel T. Doherty, Jr. on Behalf of the Maryland State Dental Association*

According to the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2021, a total of 41.1 million Americans live with disabilities – 12.6% of the US population. The percentage of Marylanders age 65 and above who have independent living difficulties is between 12 and 14%. These individuals have significant medical complications and/or cognitive disability. Many have significant dental issues, including dental neglect, that can complicate the patient’s medical conditions. Dental Medicaid providers have also seen a significant number of patients with missing or hopeless teeth who have been unable to obtain removable dentures because dentures are not a covered benefit under the Maryland Healthy Smiles Program (The Dental Medicaid Program). Many of these patients are unable to maintain a proper diet due to lack of teeth leading to medical issues and conditions arising from lack of proper nutrition. These patients also experience significant social/self-image problems.

The Adult Dental Medicaid benefit was restored in Maryland on 1/1/2023 and the Maryland Department of Health estimates 800,000 adults have qualified to be covered under this program. A significant number of this adult population are homebound or living in Long Term Care Facilities. Transporting many of these patients to traditional dental offices is not possible. If special medical transportation is available, the cost for such transportation is often more costly than the dental services that would be provided.

The Maryland Healthy Smiles Provider Advisory Board members have requested the Maryland Health Department to extend benefits to ADA CDT procedure code D9410 for each patient seen. The code is defined as “house /extended care facility call” (includes visits to nursing homes, long-term care facilities, hospice sites, institutions, etc.”). The Health Department has taken no action. Providing mobile or portable dentistry has increased dental providers’ costs due to the need for additional equipment, transportation of staff, time out of office, and additional treatment coordination with nurses, nurses’ aides, physicians, physical therapists, dietitians, and the patient’s family/caregivers. The education at University of Maryland School of Dentistry encourages students to provide outreach dental care for those who can not avail themselves of traditional dental office treatment. Without adequate reimbursement for such care, there is little incentive to provide such services. Medicaid providers have also asked the Health Department to consider having a covered benefit for partial and complete dentures, but again no action has been taken to date.

SB 600 would require the Maryland Department of Health to study the costs and benefits of adding dental coverage to the Maryland Healthy Smiles program for “house/extended care

facility calls” as well as removable dentures. The legislation would require the Maryland Department of Health to study the feasibility to include among the benefits offered by Medicaid Dental Program, with minimal restrictions: 1) removable full and partial dentures; and 2) reimbursement of providers on a per-patient basis for house and extended care facilities calls. The Department in setting rates for reimbursement for these services, shall establish the reimbursement amounts at a level that ensures that all dental providers are reimbursed adequately to provide access to care, and the rates are not less than 60% of the average commercial rates for all payors in the State who offer the services. If the average commercial rates cannot be determined, the Department shall use the benchmark charges of the American Dental Association Current Dental Terminology (CDT) Code of the services.

The study required under the bill directs the Department to solicit input from chapters of national professional dental organizations, and advocacy groups that work to improve the oral health of the State’s low-income populations.

SB 600 will quantify the need for including coverage for reimbursement for dental visits to the home bound and long-term residents of nursing homes etc., and provide coverage for full and partial dentures. The study will be using recognized and reliable sources for determining proper coverage and reimbursement rates.

Passage of SB 600 will help ensure needed dental services for some of Maryland’s most dentally compromised citizens. These dental benefits will improve the nutrition of these individuals, improve their associated health conditions, and thus, in time, will lower the overall costs of their medical care.

**For these reasons the Maryland State Dental Association requests that SB 600 be given a favorable report.**

**Submitted by:  
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