



Maryland
Hospital Association

January 31, 2024

To: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 167- Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health

Dear Chair Atterbeary:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 62 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 167. MHA remains committed to increasing access and reducing barriers to health care, including dental services. HB 167 would help ensure that public school students in Maryland regularly receive critical periodic dental examinations.

HB 167 would require students enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school to submit a certificate of dental health to their school beginning in the 2026-27 school year. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) would establish the standards for periodic dental examinations and the submission schedule for the certificate of health required by this bill.

While many factors contribute to emergency department (ED) length of stay, one of the main causes is the number of patients who could have avoided an ED visit if they had access to care at a more appropriate setting. Increasing access to dental services, including periodic dental examinations, will help ease reliance on EDs for dental care, contribute to shorter wait times, and help patients receive the right care in the right setting.

Under Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care Model, Maryland hospitals strive to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals reach beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 167.

For more information, please contact:
Jake Whitaker, Director, Government Affairs
Jwhitaker@mhaonline.org