



January 31, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 130
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 167 – PUBLIC SCHOOLS – STUDENT
HEALTH – CERTIFICATE OF DENTAL HEALTH

Benevis is a dental support organization providing non-clinical support services to dental practices across Maryland. Benevis is dedicated to its mission to improve access to dentistry by providing the highest quality non-clinical services to some of the nation’s leading dental practices. In Maryland, the nine dental practices Benevis supports specialize in providing Medicaid dental services, with those practices serving a patient population that is more than 80% Medicaid. Together, these practices make up one of the largest providers of Medicaid dental services in the state, providing just under 20% of the Medicaid dental services statewide and approximately 40% of the Medicaid dental services in the Baltimore region. As a major Medicaid dental provider in the State, we strongly support any actions taken by the General Assembly to increase awareness about the importance of oral health and educate Maryland families about dental services that are available to them.

House Bill 167 would create parity in certification requirements between oral health and other physical health exams and, thereby, elevate the significance of oral health for Maryland students and their families. HB167 also creates a significant opportunity to identify students, especially young children who are not receiving regular dental care and to connect them to affordable, quality services whether it be through the State’s Medicaid program or other free or low-cost care that is available. HB167 also helps to counteract tendencies to overlook or undervalue the importance of oral health as part of overall health and sends a public health message to families that finding a dental home is just as important and regular pediatric care.

As a supporting partner for major dental providers across Maryland, with a focus on pediatric care, Benevis stands ready to work with the Committee, the relevant state agencies and local school systems to help implement HB167 and ensure that students have access to care and the ability to meet the bill’s requirements before they begin school. Benevis urges a favorable report on House Bill 167.