



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To Ways and Means Committee

Chair: Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary

January 29, 2024

House Bill 0167: Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA), is in SUPPORT of House Bill 0167: Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health.

The children of Maryland are in great need of adequate dental care. According to the current Maryland State School Health Services Guideline, there is a positive correlation between a child's academic performance and their physical, emotional, and mental health (Maryland Department of Education & Maryland Department of Health, 2006). Even though oral health may initially be overlooked when considering a child's health, it is certainly a crucial component. In the United States, dental caries/tooth decay is the number one chronic health condition plaguing children. Twenty-five percent of children aged 5-19 who belong to low-income families are two times more likely to have untreated dental caries than their counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Maryland, unfortunately, is no different. Aside from the substantial disparity of poor oral health among low-income families, there are additional risk factors that need to be identified and addressed. The passing of this bill will equip both the Maryland Board of Education and the Maryland Department of Health with vital information to create intentional programs that will provide better oral care to children. By requiring a Certificate of Dental Health, collaborators will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses within dental care utilization among Maryland children. Developing standards for periodic dental examinations will prevent children from unnecessary tooth decay and potentially prevent the development of other serious health conditions.

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director
jdayton@mdruralhealth.org*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *Children's oral health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html>

Maryland Department of Education & Maryland Department of Health. (2006). Retention of school health services records: Maryland state school health services guideline. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSESS/SSSP/SHS/SHSGuidelines/RecordsRetention.pdf>