

**INFORMATIONAL**  
**House Bill 167**  
**Public Schools - Student Health - Certificate of Dental Health**

**House Ways and Means Committee**  
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**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 167, which would require students enrolled in a Maryland public elementary or secondary school to submit a certificate of dental health to their school.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA supports policies that provide Maryland students access to the resources they need to achieve their full potential. We understand that our students' health and wellness directly impact their academic and non-academic outcomes. Children who are unwell or in pain are more likely to not attend school, and children who are sick or who are in pain due to poor dental health cannot be fully engaged in their learning. We have also seen the horrific consequences of inequitable health care access, exemplified by the tragic loss of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver, who died in 2007 of a brain infection caused by an abscessed tooth.

We applaud the sponsor's goal of ensuring that all of Maryland's children show up to school healthy and ready to learn. We are concerned, however, about the potential impact of inequitable access to dental care services. While we acknowledge that this proof of dental health is similar to the proof of vaccination families are required to submit before their children are permitted to attend school, we are concerned that the changing insurance landscape could adversely impact our most vulnerable populations, especially as thousands of Marylanders are losing Medicaid coverage following the expiration of pandemic-era waivers. We take comfort in knowing that



there are several organizations and initiatives—such as The Deamonte Driver Dental Project and the various free dental clinics across the state—that will stand in the gap for many families. Further, we hope to see an increasing number of community schools funded through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future providing access to school-based health care, including dental services. However, in the meantime, we would be remiss if we did not raise our concern about the impact of this new requirement on families and the potential barrier to school it creates.