



SPECIAL CARE DENTISTRY  
8700 CENTRAL AVE. STE. 100  
LANDOVER, MD 20785  
OFFICE: 301.735.3006  
EMAIL: [INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](mailto:INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)  
WEB: [MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](http://MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)

SPECIALIZING IN SMILES

Honorable Members of the Maryland House of Delegates,

I am writing today to express my wholehearted support for the proposed House Bill 167 that would require a Dental Health Certificate for school-age children in the state of Maryland. As a general dentist, an advocate for public health, and a firm believer in preventive care, I strongly believe that this legislation is a necessary step towards identifying, addressing, and preventing the high incidence of early childhood dental infection.

Dental infection, commonly diagnosed as tooth decay or cavities, is alarmingly prevalent among young children. According to statistics provided by reputable health organizations, dental caries is one of the most common chronic diseases affecting children worldwide. In fact, it affects nearly 60% of children aged 5 to 17 years old in our state alone.

The impact of untreated dental infection on a child's overall health and well-being cannot be overstated. Beyond causing pain and discomfort, tooth decay can lead to difficulties in eating and speaking properly. Furthermore, untreated oral health issues can have long-lasting consequences on a child's self-esteem and social interactions, potentially affecting their academic performance as well.

By implementing mandatory dental screenings for school-age children through this proposed bill, we have an opportunity to detect potential oral health problems at an early stage. Early intervention not only ensures prompt treatment but also allows for education on proper oral hygiene practices that can prevent further deterioration of oral health.

According to peer review studies outlined by the Maryland Dental Action Coalition in the presentation of this bill in 2020:

- The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services estimates that 51 million school hours are missed each year because of dental problems (1)
- Sixty percent of children are affected by tooth decay, making it one of the most common chronic childhood diseases. In another study, children with poor oral health were nearly 3 times more likely to miss school because of dental pain (2)
- Another study found that children with poor oral health and general health were 2.3 times more likely to have poor academic performance (3)



SPECIAL CARE DENTISTRY  
8700 CENTRAL AVE. STE. 100  
LANDOVER, MD 20785  
OFFICE: 301.735.3006  
EMAIL: [INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](mailto:INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)  
WEB: [MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](http://MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)

SPECIALIZING IN SMILES

Moreover, these screenings will serve as an essential tool for identifying vulnerable populations who may not have access to regular dental care due to financial constraints or lack of awareness about available resources. By providing timely referrals and connecting families with affordable or free dental services, we can address disparities in access to oral healthcare services among different socioeconomic groups.

In addition to its immediate benefits for children's oral health outcomes, this legislation also has broader implications for public health. By promoting routine check-ups and preventive measures at an early age through these mandated screenings, we are equipping our younger generation with valuable knowledge and habits that foster lifelong oral health. This, in turn, can help reduce the burden on our healthcare system and alleviate financial strains associated with costly treatments for advanced dental diseases.

In conclusion, I urge you to support this bill that would require dental screenings for school-age children in Maryland. As I stated in my testimony in support of House Bill 0006, I have personally seen the fatal effects of non-treated dental infection leading to septicemia in my own practice. I have also completed this dental certificate and required treatment for children who are residents of the District of Columbia where this form is required to register for school. I have noticed and witnessed marked improvement in these children's oral health and the follow through of maintaining routine oral health care. This mandate would give our state, our children the great start they need for early preventative oral health care. By taking this action, we can make a significant impact on reducing the prevalence of dental caries among our youth and ensure a healthier future for generations to come. Let us prioritize preventive care and promote equitable access to oral healthcare services, recognizing that healthy smiles are essential foundations for overall well-being.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Warmly,

Dr. Nekia A. Staley, D.D.S,

Founder/Owner

Special Care Dentistry



SPECIAL CARE DENTISTRY  
8700 CENTRAL AVE. STE. 100  
LANDOVER, MD 20785  
OFFICE: 301.735.3006  
EMAIL: [INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](mailto:INFO@MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)  
WEB: [MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM](http://MYSPECIALDENTIST.COM)

SPECIALIZING IN SMILES

- 
1. Centers for Disease Control. After 60 Years of Success in Fighting Dental Decay , Water Fluoridation is Still Lacking in Many Communities. 2013
  2. Jackson S.L., Vann W.F., Kotch J.B., Pahel B.T., Lee J.Y. Impact of poor oral health on children's school attendance and performance. Am J
  3. Blumenshine S.L., Vann W.F., Gizlice Z., Lee J.Y. Children's school performance: impact of general and oral health. J Public Health Dent. 2008