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**Testimony of
Anupama Rao Tate, DMD MPH
before
House Ways and Means Committee
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 167 – Public Schools – Student Health – Certificate of Dental Health
January 31, 2024**

Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of House Bill 167. For the record, my name is Anupama Rao Tate, DMD MPH. I received my MPH from John’s Hopkins School of Public Health and for more than 20 years, I have been a pediatric dental Attending at Children's National Hospital. Children's National has been serving the nation's children since 1870. Nearly 60% of our patients are residents of Maryland, and we maintain a network of community-based pediatric practices, surgery centers and regional outpatient centers in Maryland. I have seen first-hand the impact of untreated dental decay on children and their families. Oral infections, avoidable hospital admissions, and days lost from school all from a preventable disease.

One of the most important components of this bill is the provision for early dental screening. Early preventive dental visits not only save dollars, but they also lead to better health outcomes². As a former trustee for the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and my current position on the board of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry I have advocated for the “Age One” dental visit, which is modeled after the American Academy of Pediatrics’ medical home concept. All parents deserve time spent one on one with an oral health care professional who knows their child and their families’ disease risk patterns who can partner with them, so parents gain the self-efficacy they need to raise healthy children.

Behavior change is hard, it is always better to prevent a problem rather than treat it. These early dental visits allow for relationships to grow and for families to build trust with their oral health care providers through guided conversations about preventive treatment options such and dental hygiene, fluoride therapy and dietary counseling.

We know that young children with dental decay in their baby teeth are three times more likely to develop decay in their permanent teeth², early and effective prevention of dental cavities in children has the potential to reduce suffering and expense.

I love seeing young children in our clinic, it is some of the most hopeful and joyful work I do. Parents are so engaged and full of questions. We want children to grown up pain free, in environments where oral health is valued, and families are armed with knowledge and skills to raise a cavity-free child.

I applaud Delegate Harrison for introducing this important legislation and request a favorable report on House Bill 167.

Sincerely,

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1. [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Policy on school-entrance oral health examinations. The Reference Manual of Pediatric Dentistry. Chicago, Ill.: American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry; 2023:117-9.](#)
2. [Li Y, Wang W. Predicting caries in permanent teeth from caries in primary teeth: an eight-year cohort study. J Dent Res 2002;81\(8\):561-6.](#)