



**2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 167 – Public Schools – Student Health – Certificate of Dental Health

COMMITTEE: House - Ways & Means Committee

POSITION: Letter of Concern

BILL ANALYSIS: HB 167 would require, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, each student enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in the State to submit to the school a certificate of dental health on a schedule to be determined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and for MSDE to consult with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish standards for periodic dental examinations.

POSITION RATIONALE: Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) recognizes the intent of HB 167 as an effort to improve dental health among Maryland’s school children. However, as written, the bill poses the likelihood of an unfunded mandate and significant administrative and likely programmatic burden on already stretched resources of the school health nurses in the public schools across the State.

The lack of specificity in the bill may result in MSDE designating the school health nurses in schools across the State as the recordkeepers of the certificates of dental health. MSDE could further task school health nurses with identifying children in need of dental treatment, follow-up communications with parents, management of waivers (if permissible), and other administrative tasks. Fourteen of the twenty-four local health departments in the state currently hire and provide school nurses for their jurisdictions.

The bill does not specify whether MSDE or MDH would establish standards for how and from whom parents should seek the recommended dental care for their children. In 2022-2023, there were 890,000 public school students in Maryland. The state has insufficient dental provider capacity now to support current pediatric dental needs. Furthermore, the number of dental providers who accept Medicaid and who will be needed to provide dental care for students from low-income families because of this bill, are not sufficient. Without adequate provider capacity, this bill could create an undue burden on families and the dental care system. In addition, if children are excluded from school due to a lack of a dental certificate due to an inability to get the appropriate care, their school learning could be impacted.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers urges the committee to consider these concerns for HB 167. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*