



## Maryland Community Health System

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>House Health and Government Operations Committee</b>
<b>Bill Number:</b>	<b>House Bill 1143 – Dental Services – Dental Hygienists in Schools and School-Based Health Centers and the Maryland Collaborative to Improve Children’s Oral Health Through School-Based Programs</b>
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	<b>March 11, 2025</b>
<b>Position:</b>	<b>Support</b>

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The Maryland Community Health System strongly supports *House Bill 1143 - Dental Services – Dental Hygienists in Schools and School-Based Health Centers and the Maryland Collaborative to Improve Children’s Oral Health Through School-Based Programs*. The bill will improve access to children’s dental health services through a collaborative on school-based programs.

Maryland Community Health System is a network of federally qualified health centers that provide primary, behavioral health, and dental services to underserved communities across Maryland. We are concerned that children’s access to dental services in Maryland is declining:

- In 2016, the percentage of children accessing preventative dental services through Medicaid was 64%. We have yet to recover from the impact of the pandemic. In 2023, only 56% of children in Medicaid received dental services<sup>i</sup>; and
- In 2022-2023, 51% of Maryland’s school children needed sealants, with Black children at the highest prevalence of need at 60% and the Western region of the State with the highest sealant need at 72%. <sup>ii</sup>

We need to develop a public health strategy to ensure all Maryland children have access to dental services. This legislation offers a path forward through school-based dental programs. We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net) or (443) 926-3443.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/Documents/JCRs/2020/dentalJCRfinal11-20.pdf>

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth/Documents/2024AnnualOralHealthJCR.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth/Documents/SchoolSurveySummary2023.pdf>