



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

10 March 2025

HB1143 – 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

Madame Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1143. Oral health is critical to pediatric health, yet still many Maryland children struggle to access dental care. A recent survey of student oral health conducted by the Maryland Department of Health discovered that 43% of students were experiencing dental decay, 51% needed sealant, and nearly 30% required early or urgent dental intervention¹. At the same time dental care has become increasingly inaccessible, with the rate at which children on Medicaid access preventive dental health care falling from 63.8% in 2019 to 56.5% in 2023². School settings may provide an opportunity to improve access to dental care. To explore the efficacy of school settings to improve oral health care, HB1143 establishes a collaborative to study and make recommendations on:

- Connecting families and children to permanent dental facilities through schools and community partnerships.
- Increasing the number of school-based dental hygienists through clarified scope of practice laws, grant support for uninsured children, and Medicaid reimbursements.
- Allowing school nurses to apply fluoride varnishes and other appropriate dental services with reimbursement from Maryland Medical Assistance.
- Integrating dental hygiene services within school-based health centers.
- Exploring innovative models to improve dental service delivery in schools.

HB1143 directs the Department of Health to establish the collaborative with a wide range of legislators, educators, health officials, dental associations, advocates and other stakeholders. The collaborative will prepare and submit an interim report by December 1 of this year and a final report by October 1, 2026 to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly. The collaborative sunsets on June 30, 2027.

¹ <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth/Documents/SchoolSurveySummary2023.pdf>

² <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth/Documents/2024AnnualOralHealthJCR.pdf>

Establishing this collaborative is an important step toward improving pediatric oral health and ensuring all Maryland children have access to the dental services they need. I respectfully request a favorable report on HB1143.