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**HB 771: Student Health - Program for Student Dental Health - Established  
Position: FAVORABLE  
February 25, 2025  
House Ways and Means Committee**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of House Bill 771. For the record, my name is Anupama Rao Tate, DMD MPH. I received my MPH from Johns 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 of certificate of dental health for school age children to enter the school system. Preventive dental visits not only save dollars, but they also lead to better health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> 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 believe early detection and management of oral conditions can improve a child's oral health, general health and well-being, and school readiness.<sup>1</sup>

Routine 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 as 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

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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; 2024:119-21.](#)

permanent teeth.<sup>2</sup> Early and effective prevention of dental cavities in children has the potential to reduce suffering and expense. Children with dental pain may be irritable or unable to concentrate. Dental pain can affect test performance as well as school attendance.<sup>3</sup>

I love seeing children in our clinic each year, it is some of the most hopeful and joyful work I do. We want children to grow up pain free, in environments where oral health is valued, and families are armed with knowledge and skills to raise a cavity-free child who are able to fully participate in their education.

I applaud Delegate Harrison for introducing this important legislation, which will have life-long benefits for our state's youngest residents and their families and respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 771. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

**For more information, please contact:**

Austin Morris, Government Affairs Manager

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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.](#)
  3. [Jackson SL, Vann WF, Kotch JB, Pahel BT, Lee JY. Impact of poor oral health on children's school attendance and performance. Am J Public Health 2011;101\(10\):1900-6.](#)