



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

**RE: House Bill (HB) 771– Student Health – Program for Student Dental Health –  
Established – Letter of Concern**

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of concern for House Bill (HB) 771 – Student Health – Program for Student Dental Health – Established. Starting in the 2027-2028 school year, this bill would require each student enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in the State to submit a certificate of dental health to their school each year. Additionally, this bill would require the Department to establish a program for student dental health and develop a certificate of dental health for use in public schools. This bill also requires that the school dental health program provide students and parents with information on how to find dental insurance, lists of pediatric dentists throughout the state, and information on the importance of dental health to a student’s overall health.

State dental screening and examination laws are designed to ensure the health and well-being of schoolchildren, addressing dental issues that could impede their success in school. These laws aim to establish dental records and connect children with dental care providers. However, significant challenges remain in effectively linking children to care after screening. The Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) is a federal requirement that mandates states to provide all medically necessary healthcare services to Medicaid recipients from birth through 20 years of age. Current EPSDT guidance requires states to develop a dental periodicity schedule, listing the recommended services and timing of oral exams, diagnostic tests, and preventative services, in consultation with recognized providers involved with children's dental healthcare. The Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program provides dental care to eligible Medicaid members with no premium, which includes regular checkups, cleanings, fillings, fluoride varnish, and sealants for children. Dental exams and cleanings are typically provided every six months or as recommended by the provider. Additional treatment is provided as needed. In 2022, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) issued policy

guidance which recognized the need to require appropriate follow-up care be provided after a child is screened.<sup>1</sup>

In its 2019 report update,<sup>2</sup> *State Dental Screening Laws for Children: Examining the Trend and Impact*, the Children’s Dental Health Project examined dental screening mandates similar to HB 771, and found that mandates that did not include a comprehensive case management component were little more than “paper mandates” and had no impact on children's dental health. While HB 771 requires the Department to publish lists of pediatric dentists within the state, it is important to note that pediatric dentists make up a very small number of dentists practicing in the state compared with general dentists, who can treat children in addition to adults and seniors. As specialists, pediatric dentists are also less likely to accept Medicaid payments. The Maryland School-Based Health Center Program also funds dental practices in a school or on a school campus, though expansion of this program would be necessary to meet the needs of all students in Maryland. It is also essential to recognize that oral health, while a critical aspect of overall well-being, differs from vaccines, which play a pivotal role in preventing communicable diseases transmitted in schools.

HB 771 would impose a substantial administrative burden on individual schools and health staff, who would be responsible for collecting and documenting dental health certificates. With nearly 900,000 public school students across the state, this creates a significant additional workload for school health staff that would negatively impact their ability to address health needs for students.

Furthermore, HB 771 would require the Department to hire additional staff and acquire new materials to meet its demands. However, the bill does not provide funding to support these increased requirements, leaving schools and districts to bear the financial burden.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at [sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov](mailto:sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, E. & American Dental Partners Foundation. (2019). State Dental Screening Laws for Children: Examining the trend and impact. [https://www.astdd.org/docs/state-dental-screening-laws-for-children-examining-the-trend-and\\_-impact-an-update-to-the-2008-report.pdf](https://www.astdd.org/docs/state-dental-screening-laws-for-children-examining-the-trend-and_-impact-an-update-to-the-2008-report.pdf)