

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB771 (Harrison) Student Health – Program for Student Dental Health –
Established – FAVORABLE

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jordan Virden, I am a board-certified pediatric dentist and current President of the Maryland Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. I strongly support HB 0771, that would ensure children in Maryland have a dental exam prior to starting school. Dental decay is the number one chronic condition of childhood and I see children daily in my practice with dental pain and infection. Dental decay is largely preventable, and we know that children seen earlier and on a regular basis are more likely to have better oral health outcomes. Currently dental exams prior to starting school are only required in four counties in Maryland. With HB 0771, children will not be prevented from going to school, but this law would help parents and caregivers understand how important oral health is to a child's overall health and wellbeing by making this a requirement throughout the state.

This legislation is also consistent with our American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) *Policy on School Entrance Oral Health Examinations* which states:

“The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) encourages policy makers, public health and education officials, and medical and dental communities to recognize that unmet oral health needs can impact a child's ability to learn. An oral health examination prior to matriculation into school may improve school readiness by providing a timely opportunity for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of oral conditions.”

As a board certified pediatric dentist and someone who cares deeply about the health and well-being of the children of Maryland I urge the Maryland General Assembly to adopt this important and much needed legislation.

Warmly,

Jordan Virden, DDS
Pediatric Dentist, Smiles4Children
Board Certified Pediatric Dentist, American Board of Pediatric Dentistry
President, Maryland Academy of Pediatric Dentistry