



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 9, 2022

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health & Government Operations
Committee

Re: Letter of Support - House Bill 6 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage
for Adults

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 6. Maryland hospitals support expanding Medicaid dental coverage for adults. Providing access to this service will benefit patients and help mitigate lengthy wait times in hospital emergency departments (ED).

A [recent report from the Maryland Dental Action Coalition](#) highlights how the lack of dental coverage for adults adversely impacts Maryland EDs. Findings show:

- In fiscal year 2019, there were 35,300 ED visits for nontraumatic dental conditions among all adults in Maryland
- Although Medicaid members comprise only 17% of Maryland adults, they account for 54% of all the state's ED visits for nontraumatic dental conditions and 46% of total cost

While many factors contribute to the lengthy wait times, one of the main causes is the number of patients who could have avoided an ED visit if they had access to care at a more appropriate setting.

Under Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care Model, Maryland hospitals strive to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals reach beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health. Expanding access to dental coverage will help ease Medicaid enrollees' reliance on EDs for dental care, contribute to shorter wait times, and help patients receive the right care in the right setting.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 6.

For more information, please contact:
Steven Chen, Director, Policy
Schen@mhaonline.org