

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## MDAC APPLAUDS PASSAGE OF BILL TO ESTABLISH MEDICAID ADULT DENTAL COVERAGE PILOT PROGRAM

(COLUMBIA, MD-April 6, 2018)-Today the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed *SB 284 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults – Pilot Program*, legislation that will establish a pilot program to cover adult dental services in Medicaid. The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC), the state’s leading non-governmental oral health policy and advocacy organization, strongly supported the bill.

“The single most important step to improve the oral health – and overall health – of Marylanders is a Medicaid program that covers dental services for adults,” said MDAC executive director Mary Backley. “Maryland has become a model for the nation in improving the oral health of children. The passage of SB 284 is an important step forward as we work to do the same for adults.”

Many Maryland adults have serious oral health issues that drive them to the emergency room with tooth pain and oral infections. Emergency rooms are unable to treat the causes of dental pain, so they treat the symptoms and send patients home with antibiotics, pain medications, or referrals for dental services that patients may not be able to afford.

In fiscal year 2016, Maryland adults made 42,327 emergency department visits for chronic dental conditions, with an average charge of \$537 per visit, or a total charge of \$22.7 million. These visits represent almost two percent of overall emergency room costs. Medicaid paid for 53 percent of those visits, even though Medicaid participants only account for 15 percent of the adult population in Maryland - likely the result of a lack of consistent adult dental coverage in the Medicaid program.

“MDAC applauds Senator Thomas Middleton, Senator Guy Guzzone and Delegate Mike McKay for their leadership and support of SB 284, and the Maryland General Assembly for its passage,” said Salliann Alborn, chair of the MDAC policy committee. “Many Maryland adults face serious financial obstacles to obtaining dental care. This pilot program is an important step forward in demonstrating that a Medicaid adult dental benefit that enables adults to establish a dental home, obtain preventive care, and avert costly dental conditions is a good investment in health outcomes and the fiscal health of Medicaid.”

###

**Media Inquiries:** (410) 312-5456 or [info@mdac.us](mailto:info@mdac.us)

**About MDAC:** The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC), the state’s leading non-governmental oral health policy and advocacy organization, works to improve the oral health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care. MDAC leads the development of the five-year Maryland Oral Health Plan and partners with individuals and organizations working to develop and implement initiatives to improve the oral health of all Marylanders.