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[American Association for Dental Research Annual Conference,](#)

Maryland Dental Action Coalition

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders



Middleton Introduces Bill to Mandate Funding of Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits

Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton (District 28, Charles County and Chair, Senate Finance Committee) recently introduced Senate Bill 284, Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Dental Coverage for Adults, which would require Medicaid to provide a basic adult dental benefit. The bill would help Marylanders who might have otherwise relied on the emergency room for treatment of chronic oral health conditions establish a dental home and obtain preventive oral health care.

Improved access to preventive oral health care through the addition of an adult dental benefit in Medicaid could vastly improve the oral health - and overall health - of the many Maryland adults who face serious financial obstacles to obtaining dental care.

The need for adult dental coverage in Medicaid is great. Although dental professionals statewide strive to help at-need patients through programs that offer low-cost care, or through non-profits that offer free services, it is not enough. The struggle to obtain needed dental care puts many of our most vulnerable citizens at risk of untreated pain and serious health issues.

The single most important step to improving the oral health - and overall health - of Marylanders is a Medicaid program that covers dental services for adults. In 34 states, adults who qualify for Medicaid get dental coverage. Maryland is one of just 16 states that does not have adult dental coverage in its Medicaid program.

Through the Maryland General Assembly's unanimous support of Senate Bill 169, the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) studied the cost of emergency room visits by adults with chronic dental conditions. 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. Medicaid paid for 53% of those visits, even though Medicaid participants only account for 15% of the adult population in Maryland. This discrepancy is likely the result of the lack of consistent adult dental coverage in the Medicaid program.

[Watch the January 24, 2018 MDAC briefing to the Senate Finance Committee.](#)

[Watch the January 24, 2018 MDAC briefing to the House Health and Government Operations Committee](#) (begins at 3:05:27).

[Read the press release](#) MDAC issued the day of the briefing.

[Read the cover letter](#) MDAC submitted to the Maryland General Assembly with the report.

[Read the report](#) MDAC submitted to the Maryland General Assembly.

[Learn more](#) about the financial impact of hospital visits for dental conditions in Maryland.

[E-mail MDAC](#) for a report on the rates of emergency department visits for chronic dental conditions in your county.

MDAC Garners Broad Coalition Support for SB 284

Poor oral health is a growing public health crisis among Maryland adults. In researching the outcomes of a MDAC study on emergency department visits for chronic dental conditions, DentaQuest Institute Research Director, Dr. Natalia Chalmers, found that from 2013-2016, 15 Marylanders were admitted to the hospital with critical oral health problems and later died.

On February 7, more than 24 MDAC members, partners and stakeholders testified at a Maryland Senate Finance Committee hearing on SB 284, Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Adult Dental Coverage, which would add a basic adult dental benefit to Medicaid.

Introduced on January 22 by Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton, the bill would require the Maryland

[March 21-24, 2018](#)

[American Society on Aging Conference, March 26-29, 2018](#)

[Sixth Annual Public Health Research at Maryland Day, April 3, 2018](#)

[2018 National Oral Health Conference, April 16-18, 2018](#)

[2018 National School-Based Health Care Convention, June 24-27, 2018](#)

[American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, November 10-14, 2018](#)

Webcasts

[ASTTD: Training Health Care Professionals to Focus on the Oral-Systemic Health of Older Adults](#)

[HRSA: Before You Say Ahhhh...Integrating Oral Health and Behavioral Health in Primary Care Settings-](#)

[HRSA: Clinical best practices to improve the oral health of individuals with substance use disorders](#)

Webinars

[Connecting Oral and Heart Health: Blood Pressure Screening and Smoking Cessation in the Dental Setting, February 21, 2018](#)

[Innovation and Quality in Public Health Innovation and Quality in Public Health, February 27, 2018](#)

[Iowa: An Example of an Integrated Teaching, Service & Research Geriatric Program, March 8, 2018](#)

[The Role of Community Health Workers in Oral Health, March 19, 2018](#)

[North Dakota Department of Health, Oral Health Program--Older Adults, April 26, 2018](#)

Continuing Education

[Treating Tobacco Use in Maryland: Tools for Helping Your Patients Quit](#)

Resources

[Maryland Oral Health Plan 2018-2023](#)

[Families USA: Why States Should Offer Extensive Oral Health Benefits to Adults Covered by Medicaid](#)

Department of Health, in consultation with MDAC, the Maryland State Dental Association, Maryland Dental Hygiene Association and other stakeholders to study and recommend a basic, cost-effective adult dental benefit package. The bill specifically requires that the following be considered when developing recommendations: (1) dental coverage to improve health outcomes; (2) spending caps and cost-sharing to manage costs and encourage use of preventive services; (3) incentives for managed care organizations to continue to invest in robust dental coverage packages beyond the minimums; (4) building capacity among safety net providers and private practices, and (5) streamlining administrative processes. The Maryland Department of Health would be required to report its findings and recommendations to the governor and the General Assembly on or before January 1, 2019.

The bill had overwhelming support from many individuals, as well as local, state and national organizations including: Channel Marker Mental Health Services, Chase Brexton Health Care, Chesapeake Health Care, Choptank Community Health Systems, Consumer Health First, Crossroads Community, Inc., DentaQuest Institute, Eastern Shore Area Health Education Center, Elkton Treatment Center, Families USA, Health Care for the Homeless, Health Partners, Maryland Association of County Health Officers, Maryland Hospital Association, Maryland Rural Health Association, Maryland State Dental Association, Maryland Nurses Association, National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence - Maryland Chapter, Oral Health America, and Western Area Health Education Center. The lack of opposition and broad support for Senate Bill 284 clearly demonstrates a growing health crisis and the need for affordable dental care.

MDAC and its coalition partners across the state strongly support Senator Middleton's efforts to establish Medicaid coverage of adult dental services.

[Read Senate Bill 284.](#)

[Watch the February 7 Senate Finance Committee hearing](#) on SB 284 (begins at 0:49:14).

[Read](#) the press release MDAC issued the day of the hearing.

Powerful Testimony in Support of SB 284 Speaks to Great Need for a Medicaid Adult Dental Benefit



Suzanne Straub of [Crossroads Community, Inc.](#), a behavioral health recovery center serving the five mid-shore counties of Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Talbot, and Dorchester, submitted the following testimony about one of their clients, Wyneema, in support of SB 284. Wyneema bravely and graciously agreed to be the face of adult dental care for those on medical assistance and shares her story with you.

Meet Wyneema. She is a homeless 51-year-old mother of two from Dorchester County who overcame a lifelong terror of dentists. Her fear stemmed

from several factors, but her declining health forced her hand. Thanks to the skill and compassion of Jared Nave, an Eastern Shore dentist and participant in the Crossroads Community dental program, Wyneema's fear of treatment soon ended.

Late in 2015, Wyneema hit the wall in despair. Her health was deteriorating quickly and she had limited resources to help herself. She suffered from recurring infections in her body—the most recent an abscess and fistula in her breast. Her primary care doctor advised her that surgery was essential, but not the long-term answer. Surgery was only a temporary measure unless she took deliberate steps to correct the oral infection poisoning her body.

She had few options. She turned to her Crossroads' case manager, Lisa Brooks, for advice. Lisa secured assistance for the dental expenses from the dental program at Crossroads funded by private dollars.

Dr. Nave welcomed her to his Easton office. She endured the discomfort of extracting several molars below the gum line and medicating diseased gums for an infection free mouth and a new set of dentures. She is enjoying making eye contact with others, speaking more clearly and exploring new foods all of which are feeding her in body and soul. She is no longer ashamed to join her two granddaughters in family photographs. Life is beginning to open up for her.

When asked what she would like others to take away from her story, she emphatically stated, "Do what is necessary to see a dentist!" When asked about Dr. Nave, Wyneema flashes that beautiful smile and said, "I will always be thankful for his kindness. He helped me overcome my fear and gave me hope for a new future."

[Families USA: America's Seniors Need Medicare Oral Health Coverage](#)

[Financial Impact of Emergency Department Visits by Adults for Dental Conditions in Maryland](#)

[Hospital Visits for Dental Conditions in Maryland \(aggregate report\)](#)

[Health Policy Institute: Emergency Department Visits for Dental Conditions: A Snapshot](#)

[Strengthening Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports in an Evolving Policy Environment: A Toolkit for States](#)

[ACP Fact Sheet: Oral Health and Older Adults](#)

[Oral Health America Medicare Dental Toolkit](#)

[Oral Health in America: Experiences of Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities](#)

[Oral Health 2020 National Policy Landscape Resources](#)

[OH2020: Reframing Oral Health: A Communications Toolkit for Advancing Oral Health Reform](#)

[Unlocking the Door to New Thinking: Frames for Advancing Oral Health Reform](#)

[School-Based Health Alliance's School Oral Health Resource Library](#)

[ADA: Championing Oral Health in Schools](#)

[Brush, Book and Bed Implementation Guide](#)

[ASTDD Silver Diamine Fluoride \(SDF\) Fact Sheet](#)

[Stem the Tide: Addressing the Opioid Epidemic](#)

[Rethink Your Drink \(how to make healthy drink choices\)](#)

[Compendium of Rural Oral Health Best Practices](#)

[ASTHO Telehealth Resource Guide](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oral Health Data Portal](#)

[Maryland Department of Health HPV Toolkit](#)

[ASTDD Dental Hygienist Liaisons Webcast: Strategies to Increase the Impact of State Dental Hygienist Liaisons](#)

Suzanne Straub sent us an update to let us know Wyneema "is flourishing. She moved from homelessness to living on her own, is in school and will soon be job ready. The power of the healthy mouth and the electric smile."

[Healthcare for the Homeless](#) recently profiled two clients who have benefited from oral health care. [Read their stories](#) (see pages 1 and 3).

New Poll Shows Strong Bipartisan Support for Medicaid Among Maryland Voters

Nine out of ten Maryland voters say the Medicaid program is important to the state, according to a new poll conducted by Gonzales Research & Media Services. The vast majority also feel Medicaid is important to their families, and they have deep concerns about proposals to cut the healthcare program.

Support for Maryland's Medicaid program was consistent across region, age, gender, race and political party affiliation lines, with 80 percent or more in every demographic subgroup of the survey agreeing.

The poll was commissioned for the Medicaid Supports Maryland campaign, a new non-partisan, public information initiative led by Consumer Health First, a statewide health policy, advocacy and education organization. The recently launched campaign will educate the public and policymakers about the state's Medicaid program, the diverse population it serves and how important it is to Maryland's economy.

Medicaid, which is funded by both the federal and state governments, provides health coverage for one in five Marylanders - including one in four children, two in five individuals with disabilities and three in five nursing home residents. The program touches every county in the state, with high percentages of residents enrolled in western Maryland, Baltimore City and the Lower Eastern Shore.

"Medicaid serves two critical purposes - it is the safety net health program for low- and middle-income Marylanders and an important economic engine driving the health systems in the state," said Kathy Ruben, executive director of Consumer Health First. "Medicaid serves our friends, neighbors and family members. Consequently, we all benefit from a well-resourced Medicaid program in our state."

"We view this campaign as fundamental to promoting a greater understanding among the public, elected officials and policymakers about the value of the Medicaid program to our residents, communities and to the state's economy as a whole," said Leni Preston, vice president of the Consumer Health First board. "Maryland depends on Medicaid to provide quality health care for those who need it."

The poll found that 84 percent of Marylanders say Medicaid is personally important to them and their families. Of that group, 67 percent said Medicaid is "very" important and 17 percent "somewhat" important. Marylanders across the state also expressed deep concerns about proposals to cut Medicaid. Of those polled, 78 percent are concerned that proposals to cut Medicaid at the federal or state level would leave more Marylanders without insurance.

The Gonzales poll was conducted from December 27, 2017, through January 5, 2018, and surveyed 823 registered voters in Maryland who indicated that they are likely to vote in the November 2018 general election. View the full polling data [here](#).

More information about the campaign is available at medicaidsupportsmaryland.org, as well as on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Individuals and organizations can sign on in support of the Medicaid program [here](#).

The Medicaid Supports Maryland campaign is a non-partisan educational initiative of Consumer Health First. The campaign provides information on the state's Medicaid program and its benefits to Maryland and its residents and communities.

Access to Oral Health Care Key Goal of 2018-2023 Maryland Oral Health Plan

To help ensure optimal oral health, all Maryland residents need access to affordable, comprehensive oral health care to prevent and treat oral disease. The 2018-2023 Maryland Oral Health Plan outlines key goals and actions needed to ensure that all Maryland children and adults have comprehensive dental insurance coverage through public (Medicaid/MCHP) or private insurance:

[Updates to the ASTDD Child Basic Screening Survey](#)

[ACP Fact Sheet: Oral Health and You](#)

[ACP Fact Sheet: Oral Health and Diabetes](#)

[ACP Fact Sheet: Oral Health and HPV](#)

Legislative Contacts

[U.S. Senators \(MD\)](#)

[U.S. Representatives \(MD\)](#)

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

Contact Us

Do you have events or announcements you'd like us to post in the MDAC newsletter? Send them to info@mdac.us. We'll make every effort to include them, as space permits.

Support Us

Support Maryland Dental Action Coalition Inc.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates.

[Go to smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)



Goal 1: All Maryland children have comprehensive dental insurance coverage through public (Medicaid/MCHP) or private insurance.

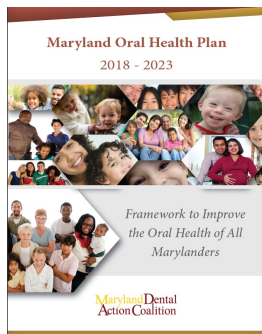
- **Action One:** Ensure all children who are Medicaid/MCHP recipients receive all the oral health services for which they are eligible.
- **Action Two:** Increase the number of children who are covered by dental insurance through insurance carriers.
- **Action Three:** Ensure that children whose coverage moves frequently - between Medicaid and qualified health plans under the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange - have consistent coverage and access to services.

Note: The lapse in federal funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provides health - and oral health - coverage for children up to age 19, left more than 140,000 Maryland children in limbo. To urge Congress to fund CHIP, MDAC and its members, partners and stakeholders called and wrote their senators and congressional representatives and participated in national social media outreach, including Twitter storms and thunderclaps. Thanks to these advocacy efforts, Congress passed a 6-year funding extension in late January. A Continuing Resolution (CR), signed into law on February 9, provided four additional years of funding for CHIP, for a total of 10 years - a full decade of stability in federal support for the program.

Goal 2: All Maryland adults have comprehensive dental insurance coverage through Medicaid or private insurance.

- **Action One:** Establish a comprehensive dental benefit for all adults who are Medicaid recipients.
- **Action Two:** Increase the number of adults with dental insurance through commercial carriers.

Note: Maryland is one of 16 states that does not have an adult dental benefit in Medicaid. The passage of SB 169, which authorized MDAC to conduct a study of the financial impact of emergency room visits by adults for chronic dental conditions and whether it is advisable to expand benefits for dental services under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, was an important first step on the path to achieving a Medicaid adult dental benefit. The introduction of SB 284 and the broad support for the bill brings us one step closer to improving oral health access for our most vulnerable citizens.



[Download a copy](#) of the Maryland Oral Health Plan, 2018-2023. The plan is also available on the MDAC website at www.mdac.us.

[Please take our survey](#) so MDAC can learn more about the actions you're taking to improve oral health in your community.

The Maryland Oral Health Plan is financially supported by the Maryland Department of Health.

Congress Extends CHIP for 10 Years

In a bipartisan vote on February 9, Congress added an additional four years of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to the six years included in the continuing resolution passed in January. This provides stability for a program that provides medical and oral health care to 9 million children nationwide.

While the bill funds CHIP through 2027, the payments for that year are broken up, which will artificially make the program's annual cost seem lower than its true cost. This may pose a problem when policymakers aim to calculate CHIP's cost beyond 2027.

But now we celebrate, knowing that more than 140,000 children in Maryland will stay covered for ten years.

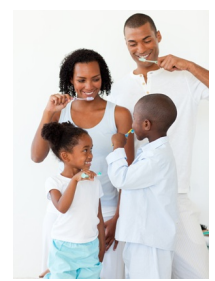
Read the [CDHP blog on the renewal of CHIP](#) for a decade

Read the Families USA [blog on the CHIP extension](#).

Read Community Catalyst's [press statement on the CHIP bill as a positive step forward](#).

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

National Children's Dental Health Month is a great time to remind parents that the key to a healthy smile is early preventive care. Starting oral health care in infancy and beginning regular dental visits by a child's first birthday, brushing twice a day, and drinking fluoridated water help establish good oral hygiene routines that will last a lifetime.



The Children's Dental Health Project also suggests that we make this month matter more by talking about redesigning our oral health system to address a health care and insurance system that separates the body from the mouth. Read more [here](#).

MDH Office of Oral Health Seeks Dental Director

Do you have a passion for public service? Do you want your work to have a statewide impact? Do you want to lead a dynamic team that is implementing innovative programming?

The Maryland Department of Health is currently recruiting for a senior level dentist with public health experience to lead the Office of Oral Health (OOH). Managing a fifteen-person team, the OOH Director offers an unparalleled opportunity to implement a strategic vision towards improving the oral health of Marylanders. Interested candidates are invited to [review the job listing and submit an application](#).

MDAC Welcomes New Members



MDAC is pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Mary Bean, D.D.S.
- Laurie Brenchley, R.D.H., B.S.

Join us! To become an MDAC member, [click here](#).

The mission of the Maryland Dental Action Coalition is to develop and maintain a statewide partnership of individuals and organizations working together to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care.