



June/July 2021

## MFUME, MD DELEGATION PUSH TO EXPAND MEDICARE Call for addition of dental, hearing and vision benefits in Medicare Part B



U.S. Representative Kweisi Mfume joined fellow Maryland Congressmen Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes, Anthony Brown, David Trone, and Jamie Raskin in calling for an overhaul of the Medicare system to expand eligibility to more Americans and to increase coverage among current beneficiaries. More than 150 lawmakers urged the Biden-Harris administration to prioritize this issue and improve Medicare with expanded eligibility.

“Americans across the country want expanded Medicare eligibility and expanded Medicare benefits,” said Mfume. “Under the current system, too many older adults have too many dental, hearing and vision needs that often go unaddressed. Meeting these vital healthcare needs and reigning in the spiraling costs of prescription medicines by allowing Medicare to negotiate pharmaceutical pricing is just commonsense.”

The lawmakers wrote a [letter dated May 27, 2021](#) to President Biden and Vice President Harris asking that these reforms to Medicare be included as part of the American Families Plan. The letter pointed to the strong bi-partisan support for the proposal as well as different data points in favor of their requests, including 65 percent of Americans favor lowering the eligibility age for Medicare. It also highlighted the challenges confronting older Americans. At least 75 percent of Medicare beneficiaries who need a hearing aid do not have one, 70 percent of beneficiaries did not go to the dentist in the past year, and nearly half did not have an eye exam in the past year. The lawmakers’ proposal called for finally providing coverage in these areas, while establishing an out-of-pocket spending cap.

In the letter, the lawmakers also pointed to long-term benefits for the country if this were to become legislation signed by the White House. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that Medicare could save over \$450 billion and increase revenue by \$45 billion over the next decade by requiring Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies. The savings could be used to further expand Medicare by making new investments in coverage and affordability. Providing dental, hearing and vision coverage could mitigate the prevalence of health care challenges like diabetes, cardiovascular issues, depression, and dementia. Perhaps most significantly, older Americans often delay addressing vital health care needs until they are covered under Medicare. This allows potential problems to worsen, and become more expensive, as demonstrated by the sudden increase in cancer diagnoses after individuals reach the age of 65. Opening Medicare enrollment at an earlier point would help to counteract that dynamic.

The lawmakers’ letter made clear that their goal was multi-faceted, seeking to greatly enhance the current package of benefits enjoyed by seniors, while also preparing for the future needs of the program.

“We are asking for you to prioritize the expansion and improvement of Medicare in the American Families Plan,” wrote the 156 lawmakers. “Lowering the Medicare eligibility age and improving its benefits would provide immediate and substantial relief for millions of individuals throughout the United States, as well as much-needed long-term security.”

Last April, as part of the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) Hill Day, a MDAC delegation met with Congressman Mfume to ask for his support of an adult dental benefit in Medicaid. MDAC CEO Mary Backley, Dr. Leslie Grant, Past President of the National Dental Association, Dr. Ricardo Kimbers, a private practitioner in Baltimore, Laurie Norris, JD, of OPEN, and MDAC Board Chair Dr. Brooks Woodward of Chase Brexton Heath Center discussed oral health needs in Maryland, successes to date, and proposed legislative solutions to improve the oral health of all Marylanders.

MDAC is thankful to U.S. Representative Mfume for his leadership and support of an adult dental benefit in Medicare. MDAC is also thankful for the support of U.S. Representatives Dutch Ruppersberger, John

## **MD CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION ANNOUNCES \$8 MILLION IN FUNDING Will strengthen COVID-19 health literacy and language services**

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U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen and Congressmen Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes, Kweisi Mfume, Jamie Raskin and David Trone (all D-MD) recently announced \$7,939,842 in COVID-19 relief funding to expand access to community-based health services in Baltimore City and Frederick County. “This new round of federal COVID-19 funding will help improve the dissemination of public health information in minority communities,” the lawmakers said. “We will continue working to secure additional resources to strengthen public health and keep our communities safe.”

The award comes from the Office of Public Health and Science and Office of Minority Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. It includes:

- \$4,000,000 for the Baltimore City Health Department
- \$3,939,842 for the City of Frederick

Funding will raise awareness on the best ways to curb the spread of COVID-19, bolster COVID-19 vaccination efforts and strengthen guidance for general public health measures in vulnerable communities.

## **WHO ASKED TO DEVELOP GLOBAL ORAL HEALTH STRATEGY World Health Assembly Resolution Paves Way for Better Oral Health Care**

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The World Health Assembly, noting that oral diseases disproportionately affect poor and socially disadvantaged populations, approved a historic resolution on oral health that urges Member States to address key risk factors of oral diseases.



More than 3.5 billion people suffer from oral diseases, most of which are preventable. Barriers to preventive care, including a lack of affordable care and the inaccessibility of fluoride in many parts of the world, can lead to untreated dental decay and serious oral health issues.

The May 27 resolution urges Member States to address oral health risk factors shared with other non-communicable diseases, including high sugar consumption, tobacco use, and harmful alcohol use. It also calls for a preventive approach that includes oral health promotion and the integration of oral and primary care.

The World Health Assembly asked the World Health Organization to develop a draft global strategy to address oral disease by 2022, and by 2023 translate the strategy into action and report back on progress and results until 2031 as part of the consolidated report on non-communicable diseases.

## **MDAC SUPPORTS MDH APPLICATION TO RENEW §1115 WAIVER Successful Medicaid Adult Dental Pilot Program included in renewal application**

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This spring, MDAC presented an overview of the Medicaid Adult Dental Pilot Program and utilization rates to members of the Maryland Medicaid Advisory Committee. The committee maintains the quality of the Maryland Medicaid HealthChoice Program by assisting the Maryland Department of Health with implementation, operation, and evaluation of the program. The 28 member committee includes advocates for the Medicaid population, senators and delegates from the Maryland General Assembly, providers who are familiar with the medical needs of low-income population groups, and representatives of hospitals, the Maryland Health Care Commission, and the Maryland Association of County Health Officers.

Due to the program’s success as evidenced by the dual eligible adult utilization rate and the robust network of Maryland providers participating in the program, continuation of the Medicaid Adult Dental Pilot Program is included in the Maryland Department of Health’s recent application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to renew its §1115 demonstration waiver.

[Read the letter](#) MDAC submitted to Medicaid in support of the Medicaid Adult Dental Pilot Program renewal.

## **MDAC LAUNCHES BROWN BAG WEBINAR SERIES ON JULY 28 Oral Health Disparities in Mental Health, Cancer, and Emergency Department Visits**

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Dr. Eric Tranby from the CareQuest Institute (Formerly DentaQuest Institute) will present the first talk for in MDAC’s Oral Health Equity Brown Bag Webinar Series at noon EDT on July 28th. Dr. Tranby will share recent and emerging research findings that highlight inequities in oral health.

Dr. Tranby's recent work includes a report on the intersection of oral health and mental



illness; a study with MDAC that reveals stark disparities by race in emergency room admissions for dental visits in Maryland; and a national analysis of commercial insurance and Medicaid claims data that lays bare differences in oral cancer diagnosis and treatment based on sex and race.

All interested in oral health equity are encourage to attend. Advance registration is required. [Register here.](#)

## **PRESERVE TELEHEALTH ACT OF 2021 TAKES EFFECT JULY 1**

### **Teledentistry continues despite end of State of Emergency in Maryland**

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To help prevent the transmission and spread of COVID-19, the Maryland Department of Health, based on both Executive Orders from the Governor and waivers from the federal government, authorized the use of telehealth, including teledentistry, during the State of Emergency in Maryland.

Although Governor Hogan lifted the State of Emergency effective July 1, 2021, the Preserve Telehealth Act of 2021 went into effect the same day. Telehealth services, including teledentistry, covered under a person's health insurance policy remain covered without interruption.

MDAC was the leading organization to ensure the legislation included Medicaid coverage for teledentistry. Teledentistry can play an important role in helping clinicians establish and build trust with their patients, engage patients who are at high risk of dental disease and decay, and provide education on the importance of oral health to overall health. It is a useful tool to reduce the cost of care and improve the oral health of Marylanders, particularly those in rural areas of the state that lack a sufficient number of providers.

## **HHS INVITES ORGS TO BECOME HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 CHAMPIONS**

### **Collaboration to help all achieve their full potential for health and well-being**

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The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion invites public- and private-sector organizations that support Healthy People's vision to become Healthy People 2030 Champions

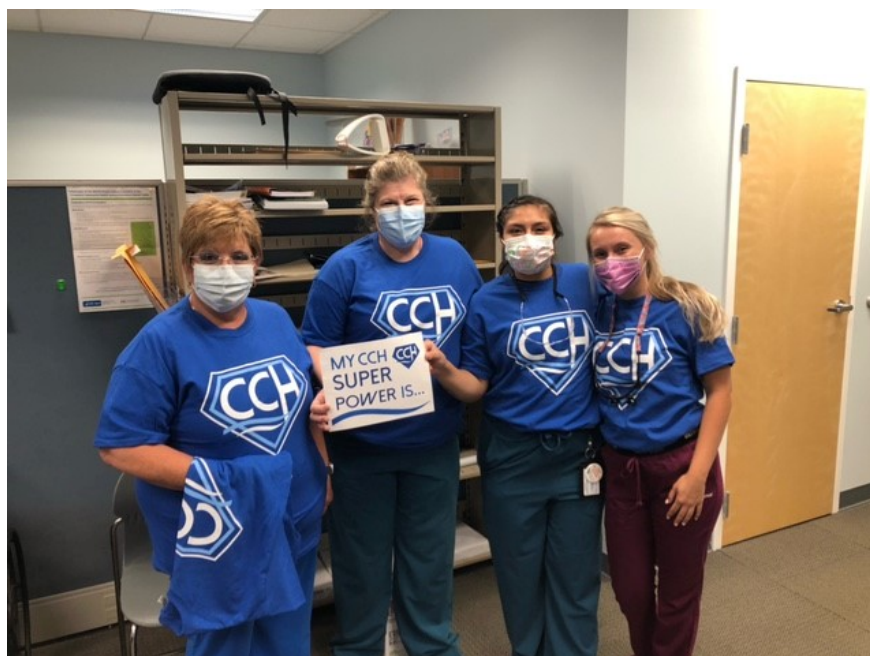
Healthy People 2030 Champions are organizations committed to working toward Healthy People's overarching goals and objectives. ODPHP will recognize Healthy People Champions on health.gov, and Champions will receive a digital badge to highlight their support of the initiative on their own websites. They'll also get information, tools, and resources to help them promote Healthy People 2030 among their communities, partners, and others interested in achieving Healthy People 2030 goals.

[Click here](#) for further information and to review the Healthy People Champion requirements.

## **CHOPTANK HEALTH RECEIVES HEALTH CARE HERO AWARD**

### **Recognized for outstanding efforts addressing the COVID-19 pandemic**

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*Pictured: Members of the Goldsboro dental team at Choptank Community Health System*

The Daily Record of Baltimore has recognized Choptank Community Health System as a 2021 Health Care Hero. Choptank Health is the only award recipient on the Eastern Shore and one of three statewide organizations recognized for their outstanding efforts addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maryland is a national leader in health care research and development and home to several renowned health care organizations, including Choptank Health. The Daily Record's Health Care Heroes Awards honor those individuals and organizations who have made an impact on the quality of health care within the state. The editors of The Daily Record selected the winners.

Choptank Health is one of 17 Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)-funded health care centers in Maryland specializing in caring for hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations. Health centers are community-based organizations that serve all populations. Health Centers serve more than 28 million people nationwide and provide affordable, high quality, comprehensive primary care to people from throughout the local communities, including those underserved and uninsured.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this state-wide award," said Choptank Health's CEO, Sara Rich. "The Choptank Health team's response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in more lives protected through our innovative outreach efforts and each Choptank Health team member's unwavering dedication to our mission of health care for all.

"During the pandemic Choptank Health took testing, vaccinations, and health care services to our most hesitant and hard-to-reach communities," Rich says. "Through community partnerships including the Avalon Theatre's recent Multi-Cultural Festival and outreach to the Dorchester County's migrant workers with the Dorchester County Health Department, we have been able to help address the community's needs."

Health Care Heroes awards are presented in several categories, including Advancements and Innovation in Health Care, Community Outreach/Education Hero, COVID-19 Hero, Lifetime Achievement, Nurse of the Year, Nurse Practitioner of the Year, Physician Assistant of the Year, Physician of the Year and Workplace Wellness Program of the Year.

"The 2021 Health Care Heroes have faced incredible challenges, and they never give up. Their knowledge, skills and leadership are also making a significant impact on patients, families, the industry and the community," said Suzanne Fischer-Huettner, senior group publisher of The Daily Record. "Our Health Care Heroes are outstanding, and we thank them for all they do to provide quality health care in Maryland and beyond."

## **OOH DEVELOPING HIV ORAL HEALTH PILOT PROGRAM**

### **Will address oral health needs of people living with HIV**

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*The article below was submitted by the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health:*

June 5, 2021, marked 40 years since the first official reporting, in CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), of five cases describing what later became known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and what is now HIV Stage III. On this 40th anniversary, we remember the more than 32 million people who have died from HIV worldwide since the start of the global epidemic, and the 38 million people currently living with HIV (CDC-

Museum-40yearsofprogress, 2021). Along with the global community, we are redoubling our efforts to ensure equitable access to services and prevention strategies, especially for those disproportionately affected by HIV, so that we may end the HIV epidemic in the U.S. and around the world.

In response to this effort, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Office of Oral Health in collaboration with the Infectious Disease Prevention and Health Services Bureau are developing a HIV Oral Health Pilot program to address the needs of oral health care for People Living with HIV (PLWH). The American Dental Association recommends that oral health care be part of all HIV treatment plans. People living with HIV (PLWH) are more susceptible to infections, including oral infections, which can affect their overall health (American Dental Association: Oral Health Topic-Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), 2019). It is important for primary care providers (PCPs) to identify HIV patients who have not seen an oral health care provider and refer them to services. The primary goal of the project is to develop a comprehensive program, including increase referral and access to oral health care, a social marketing campaign, and awareness of the importance of regular oral health care among PLWH.

# 40 YEARS OF PROGRESS

It's Time to End the HIV Epidemic

To find out more information related to the HIV Oral Health program, please visit <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/oralhealth>

Together we can stop HIV. Looking for information on HIV [testing](#), [prevention](#), [treatment](#) and [stigma](#)? Click the topic to find out more. *Let's Stop HIV Together* is part of the national [Ending the HIV Epidemic \(EHE\)](#) initiative.

## **CMS OMH PROGRAM OFFERS TOOLS TO ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITIES** **Personalized coaching, resources, data analysis, other resources available**

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Health care organizations working to address health disparities can access technical assistance through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of Minority Health (CMS OMH).

The CMS OMH Health Equity Technical Assistance program offers personalized coaching, resources to help improve care for underserved populations, data collection and analysis, assistance in developing a language access plan, and resources to embed health equity into strategic plans.

For more information and to register, visit [www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/equity-initiatives/Health-Equity-Technical-Assistance](http://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/equity-initiatives/Health-Equity-Technical-Assistance)

## **NOMINATE COMMUNITY STARS NOW!** **NODORH Rural Health Day award nominations due by August 2, 2021**

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The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health's (NOSORH) is now accepting nominations for its annual Community Star award program now through August 2, 2021.

A highlight of National Rural Health Day, the Community Stars awards honor those working to address social determinants of health and improve the lives of rural residents.

For more information, visit: [www.powerofrural.org/community-stars/](http://www.powerofrural.org/community-stars/)

## **CHOPTANK SEEKS DENTISTS, HYGIENISTS** **Info**

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Choptank Community Health (CCHS), a private, non-profit community health system serving the heart of Maryland's Mid-shore region (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties), is seeking a dentist, two dental hygienists, and a dental clinic quality director to join their patient-focused dental team. View the job responsibilities and required qualifications for each position at: <https://choptankhealth.org/employment/jobs/>

If you have excellent clinical, interpersonal and organizational skills, and the desire to join a winning team of healthcare professionals please forward resumes and contact Chief Dental Officer Dr. Sandra Garbely at [SGarbely@choptankhealth.org](mailto:SGarbely@choptankhealth.org) or via phone at 410-200-6080, or forward resume to Choptank's HR Director at: [rhbarton@choptankhealth.org](mailto:rhbarton@choptankhealth.org)

**"People are realizing that if we really want to change health outcomes, we need to look at more than just visiting a dental office and medical office, we need to look at broader social contexts of how people are living."**

## NEWS & RESOURCES

### Cancer

[Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan](#)

### Diabetes

[Maryland Diabetes Action Plan](#)

### Disease Prevention

[Time to Take Gum Disease Seriously: The Societal and Economic Impact of Periodontitis](#)

[The WHO Global Strategy for Oral Health: an Opportunity for Bold Action](#)

[The Importance of the Age One Dental Visit](#)

[Dental Sealants: A Resource Guide](#)

[Predicting Tooth Loss](#)

[Making Visits to the Dentist Easier for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

### Health Equity

[With Roots In Civil Rights, Community Health Centers Push For Equity In The Pandemic](#)

[Building a Culture of Health Equity from Within: Spotlight on Virginia Medicaid](#)

[Sharing What We Have Learned: Healthy City Collaborative](#)

### Maternal and Child Health

[Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: A Resource Guide](#)

### Medicare

[Adding a Dental Benefit to Medicare Part B: What About Medicare Advantage or Medigap Plans?](#)

[On Medicare and Need Dental Work? Beware a Big Bill.](#)

## MD ADULT DENTAL WAIVER PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS



Thousands of Maryland adults are accessing dental care through the Medicaid Adult Dental Waiver Program.

According to Maryland Medicaid, from January 1, 2021 through June 24, 2021:

- 4,070 claims were submitted
- 2,740 unique members filed valid claims
- 91 members met annual \$800 cap
- 447 unique providers submitted claims
- \$653,426 paid

From January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020:

- 7,919 claims were submitted
- 4,140 unique members filed valid claims
- 313 members met annual \$800 cap
- 576 unique providers submitted claims
- \$1,283,326 paid

*Note: 2020 numbers have been adjusted to reflect claims received after the first of the year for services performed in 2020.*

Since the June 1, 2019 launch of the Medicaid Adult Dental Waiver Program, Medicaid has paid \$3,179,540.44 in dental services for thousands of Maryland adults.

## 2018-2023 MARYLAND ORAL HEALTH PLAN GOALS

[Dental Caries Among the Geriatric Population: A Decade Long Study](#)

## Oral Health Advocacy

[Equity and Community Engagement in Statewide Oral Health Policy Advocacy: An Analysis of the Field and Recommendations for Improvement](#)

## Oral Health & Overall Health

[The Mouth-Body Connection: This Dentist Is Breaking Down The Wall Between Medicine And Dentistry](#)

[WHO Approves Landmark Resolution on Global Oral Health](#)

[Fact Sheets: The Impact of Oral Health on Major Health Conditions](#)

[Poor Oral Health Linked to Muscle Loss and Diabetes](#)

[Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month: Can Good Oral Health Help Protect Against Alzheimer's Disease?](#)

[The Connection Between Oral Health and Mental Health](#)

[Oral Health and Behavioral Health in Patients Experiencing Homelessness](#)

[Innovations in Oral Health and Primary Care Integration](#)

## Oral Health Policy

[When Will We Make Child Dental Health a National Priority?](#)

[Oral Health Advocacy Toolkit: Strategies and Resources for Dental Schools and Dental Hygiene Programs](#)

## Rural Health

[NRHA COVID-19 Resources](#)

## Teledentistry

[Preparing for Teledentistry: A Guide for Dental Practices](#)

## LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS

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

## Maryland Oral Health Plan

2018 - 2023



*Framework to Improve  
the Oral Health of All  
Marylanders*

MarylandDental  
ActionCoalition

The 2018-2023 Maryland Oral Health Plan outlines 11 oral health goals in three key areas: access to oral health care, oral disease and injury prevention, and oral health literacy and education.

[DOWNLOAD THE PLAN](#)

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

## WEBINARS

[Making the Case for Adult Dental Coverage in Medicaid, July 8, 2021](#)

[Government and Primary Care: In Service to the VaccINATION, July 12, 2021](#)

[Integration of Care to Improve Health Outcomes, July 27, 2021](#)

[Oral Health Disparities in Mental Health, Cancer, and Emergency Department Visits, July 28, 2021](#)

## EVENTS

[ADA SmileCon, October 11-13, 2021](#)

[MRHA Rural Health Conference: Rural Resiliency, Reflection, & Recovery, October 18-19, 2021 \(virtual\)](#)

## SUPPORT MDAC

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

[Maryland State Legislators](#)



Give a little to make a big impact! Your gifts, both large and small, will be used to promote good oral health behaviors, prevent oral disease and injury, and improve access to oral health care for all Marylanders, no matter where they live or what their special circumstances might be. Please help us continue this important work.

[DONATE NOW!](#)

MDAC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and contributions to support its activities are most appreciated. Thank you.

## CONTACT

Do you have events or announcements you'd like to share? Contact MDAC, and we'll make every effort to include them in our next newsletter, as space permits.

[Contact MDAC](#)

## JOIN

MDAC is statewide coalition of clinical care providers, governments, non-profits, academic institutions, managed care organizations, foundations and associations working collaboratively to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care.

[Join MDAC](#)

[www.mdac.us](http://www.mdac.us)

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