

Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland

May 23, 2022

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senate Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Chapters 599 and 600 of the Acts of 2021
Interim Report of the Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland General Assembly**

Dear Governor Hogan, Chair Pinsky, Chair Kelley, and Chair Peña-Melnyk:

Chapters 599 and 600 of the Acts of 2021 established the Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland (Task Force). The Task Force is required to (1) analyze current access to dental services in the State, with a focus on the socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, age, and disability of residents as factors impacting access to dental services; (2) identify areas of the State where a significant number of residents are not receiving oral health care services, distinguishing between pediatric and adult populations; (3) identify barriers to receiving dental services in areas in need; (4) analyze the specific impact of such barriers; (5) assess options to eliminate such barriers, including the feasibility of establishing a program for dental therapy in the State; and (6) make recommendations to increase access to dental services in the State. The Task Force must submit an interim report by May 1, 2022, and a final report by December 1, 2022. This letter serves as the Task Force's interim report.

The Task Force met six times in 2021 and early 2022 before taking a hiatus for the 2022 legislative session. The Task Force heard presentations from the Maryland Department of Health, including the Medicaid Office of Innovation, Research, and Development; the Acute Care Administration; and the Office of Oral Health. The Task Force was also briefed by the National Association of Dental Plans, United Concordia Dental, the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, the Director of Dental Health at the Allegany County Health Department, and a professor

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from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry who has researched the impact of reimbursement rates on provider participation in Medicaid.

In addition to these presentations, subgroups of the Task Force have worked outside of full group meetings to gather statistics and information pertaining to certain populations facing barriers to oral health. The populations researched are: pediatric; elderly; adult; disabled; Medicaid; and immigrant.

The Task Force expects to meet at least monthly during summer and early fall 2022 to:

- Hear presentations on (1) federal dental coverage under Medicaid and Medicare, (2) establishing a dental therapist license, and (3) pediatric population needs;
- Discuss workforce shortage concerns;
- Continue exploring barriers to oral health faced by the identified populations; and
- Develop recommendations for inclusion in the Task Force's December 2022 final report.

The members of the Task Force appreciate the advice and assistance of the numerous private citizens and public officials who have participated in the Task Force's activities thus far. As co-chairs, we would also like to thank the Task Force members and staff for their time and effort, particularly in light of the challenges faced this year and the need to accommodate virtual meeting formats.

Sincerely,

Dr. Debono R. Hughes, DDS
Task Force Co-chair
Director of the Office of Oral Health
Maryland Department of Health

Mark A. Reynolds, DDS, PhD
Task Force Co-chair
Dean
University of Maryland School of Dentistry

DRH/MAR:LAR/TNB:mr

cc: Heather Shek, Director, MDH Office of Governmental Affairs
Sarah Albert, Department of Legislative Services, 5 copies (MSAR #13233)