Maryland Legislature Takes Steps to Expand Medicaid - Bipartisan Effort Authorizes Adult Dental Benefit

Maryland General Assembly approves bill to study emergency room visits to treat chronic dental conditions and to authorize the establishment of an adult dental benefit as part of the state’s Medicaid program.

Annapolis, Maryland (PRWEB) April 13, 2017 -- With only hours to go the Senate approved SB169, a bill sponsored by Senator ‘Mac’ Middleton (Charles County), to study emergency room visits to treat chronic dental conditions for individuals on Medicaid, and amended to authorize the establishment of an adult dental benefit as part of the state’s Medicaid program.

Earlier this week Delegate Mike McKay, a Republican from Western Maryland, went to the Democratic-controlled House floor and in a passionate address offered his bill, HB1158, to authorize the expansion of Medicaid adult dental coverage, as an amendment to SB169. The House, and later the Senate, unanimously accepted the amendment and passed the bill which will create a statutory framework for the program, and open a pathway for funding in the next state budget.

"This was a truly bipartisan team effort," said Delegate Mike McKay (Washington and Allegheny Counties). "I think Maryland has turned a corner and finally recognizes the serious and irreparable health consequences of poor oral health. This legislation puts us on track to include an adult dental benefit in Medicaid. Too many people are suffering and living in chronic pain needlessly. By putting oral health on the front burner we have helped put a smile on the face of thousands of Marylanders,”

The legislation authorizes the Maryland Dental Action Coalition to conduct a study on emergency room visits for chronic dental-related illnesses. As a result of the study, policymakers can compare the cost of annual emergency room visits to providing preventative dental insurance to adults on Medicaid.

“Expanding Medicaid to include an adult dental benefit is the right thing to do. Uninsured adults have virtually no access to care and as a result, we see increased emergency room visits and related systemic illnesses that can often have life threatening consequences," said Salliann Alborn, chair of the Maryland Dental Action Coalition. “Together, we will raise the bar to improve access to oral health care like many other states have already done for their citizens.”

SB169

HB1158
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