



SUPPORT
Senate Bill 141 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program-Former Foster Care
Adolescents- Dental Care
Finance Committee
11 February 2015

The ***Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform*** (Coalition) is a nonpartisan, statewide alliance of thousands of individuals and 100 organizations. It works to promote health equity through access to high-quality, comprehensive and affordable health care for all Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our support for Senate Bill 141 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Former Foster Care Adolescents – Dental Care

With the Coalition's focus on health equity we would like to focus, in particular, on the benefit that SB141 would provide in two areas. First, it would provide equity by ensuring that former foster youth, who are now eligible for Medicaid up until age 26, as those can have the same oral health benefits as those who can remain on their parents' health plans. Maryland took the important step of expanding this benefit prior to the Affordable Care Act. Now it has the opportunity to, once again, be a national leader to ensure that the impact of oral health care is on a par with medical care.

At the same time Maryland can address the health disparities evident in racial and ethnic minorities. Writing in 2010, then Surgeon General Regina Benjamin said, "the silent epidemic of oral diseases disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities, especially children, the elderly and racial and ethnic minority groups."¹ Ten years later, with Healthy People 2020² we again see the emphasis on disparities based upon social and economic conditions. Seventeen of the Healthy People 2020 objectives relate directly to oral health and a number of others reflect the connection between oral disease and other chronic illnesses.

SB141 is a common sense approach to, not only improving the immediate and long-term health of a particularly vulnerable population, but it does so in a way that addresses a shared goal of reducing health disparities and promoting health equity.

For these reasons, the Coalition supports Senate Bill 141 and urges a favorable report.

Submitted by: Leni Preston, Chair - leni@mdchcr.org

¹ *The Silent Epidemic*, Regina Benjamin, MD <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2821841/>

² Healthy People 2020 <https://www.healthypeople.gov/>