



P.O. Box 2195 • Ellicott City, MD 21041-2195 • (301) 639-7592 • www.MyMDHA.com

February 16, 2012

Support: SB 867 State Department of Education - Oral Health Education - Certification and Monitoring

Dear Senator Carter Conway, Senator Dyson, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

As Legislative Chair, of the Maryland Dental Hygienists' Association, and on behalf of the 2,500 licensed, Registered Dental Hygienists in Maryland, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in Support of SB 867. MDHA is a constituent of the American Dental Hygienists' Association, the largest national organization representing Registered Dental Hygienists. We are a forward thinking group concerned with advancing the art and science of dental hygiene by:

- Ensuring access to quality oral health care,
- Increasing awareness of the benefits of prevention, while
- Promoting the highest standards of dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research.

Our goal is to prevent oral disease and serve all Maryland Citizens with the highest level of integrity and professionalism.

Dental caries (tooth decay) is:

- The single most common chronic childhood disease
- 5 times more common than asthma
- 7 times more common than hay fever.
- Over 50 percent of 5- to 9-year-old children have at least one cavity or filling, and that proportion increases to 78 percent among 17-year-olds.¹

A 12 year old Maryland boy, Deamonte Driver, died in 2007 after bacteria from an untreated abscessed tooth spread to his brain. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 2007, children miss approximately 50 million school hours due to dental diseases.² Oral diseases can be painful, costly, disfiguring, and in rare instances, life-threatening. Emerging research also suggests that oral diseases are linked with systemic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and preterm low birth weight infants.

Fortunately, most oral diseases can be prevented. The best way to ensure that a child does not get cavities or gum disease is to instill proper oral habits early. Good oral hygiene routines should be established as early as infancy and continued throughout life. While dental hygienists and dentists are valuable resources in promoting, establishing, and maintaining oral health in infants, children, and adolescents, our efforts alone are not enough. MDHA applauds the efforts of legislators to promote

dental health and oral disease prevention via Maryland's health education curriculum in schools!

Many parents do not fully understand some of the basic concepts of prevention, such as:

- Brush your teeth two times a day
- Floss your teeth once a day
- Eat healthy foods
- Limit snacking
- Visit your dentist or dental hygienist two times a year
- Drink fluoridated water
- Wear a mouth guard when playing sports, etc.

We believe these concepts should be taught to our children and the school system can help facilitate this learning.

We thank the legislators for your continued support! If you would like additional information, please contact the Maryland Dental Hygienists' Association's legislative committee at LegislativeChair@MyMDHA.com.

Respectfully,

Marion Manski, RDH, MS
President
Maryland Dental Hygienists' Association

Deborah L. Cartee, RDH, MS
Legislative Chair
Maryland Dental Hygienists' Association

1. US Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General-- Executive Summary*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, 2000.

2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing Dental Caries. Accessed from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/factsheets/Prevention/oh.htm> on December 19, 2007.