



# Maryland Dental Society

A Component Chapter of the National Dental Association

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**For Immediate Release**

## ***Oral Health Education Bill Signed Into Law***

**Annapolis, Maryland.** (May 22, 2012) - Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley signed the 2012 legislation *Oral Health Education – Certification and Monitoring* into law today. The pen-to-paper event took place in the State House with Dr. Willie J. Richardson, President of the Maryland Dental Society and other members of the organization, including National Dental Association Past President and Legislative Chair, Dr. Leslie Grant. Mr. Ralph Fuccillo, President of the DentaQuest Foundation and Mrs. Grace Williams, member of the Maryland Dental Action Coalition were also present to witness the official bill signing. Maryland dentists are most pleased with the signing of Senate Bill 867/House Bill 1401 into state law. All states recognize the disparities in oral health across ethnic minorities and low income children. Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease and it causes significant pain, loss of school days and may lead to severe and sometimes fatal infections. These are facts Maryland dentists know all too well and are determined to help change with the new *Oral Health Education – Certification and Monitoring* law.

CEO & Director of Development for The Children's Oral Health Institute, Dr. Winifred J. Booker who attended the signing said, "The groundwork that went into developing the law is a labor shared by the profession of dental medicine." The Maryland Dental Society stayed the course during the legislative session to help shepherd passage of the bill through both the Senate and the House. In 2008, The Children's Oral Health Institute asked members of the Maryland Dental Society, Maryland State Dental Association and the Maryland State Board of Education to convene for the first time to discuss the inclusion of oral health education in the state curriculum. The Board of Education collaborated with dental professionals on the crafting of the legislative language that became law today. Written testimony was provided by the Maryland Dental Action Coalition, the Baltimore Teacher's Union, Advocates for Children and Youth, and the National Dental Association, to name just a few. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners testified during the 2012 legislative session with members of organized dentistry and leaders in education to help solidify this progressive, new oral health education law.

Maryland dentists are excited to bring to the attention of all states the 2012 *Oral Health Education – Certification and Monitoring* legislation that has passed into state law. Many professionals feel it is necessary as well as prudent that this information be shared throughout the country about the invaluable importance and cost saving effectiveness of educating children early about their oral health. This new law may yet be the biggest part in the equation to help relieve the financial strain that preventable dental diseases continues to place on the United States health care commerce. Oral health professionals are proud of the legislation that could play a major role in helping to end the needless suffering children deal with from dental pain every day in Maryland classrooms and classrooms throughout the nation.

Dr. Roy Irons, President of the National Dental Association has previously stated "Incorporating oral health education into public school curriculums is a safe and effective measure to help prevent the most common dental diseases. It is consistent with the mission of the National Dental Association and we applaud Maryland's crafting of this seamless legislation that I hope to encourage the state of Mississippi to embrace."

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Visit these organizations to learn more about their commitment to dental medicine and oral health. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at [www.dhnh.org](http://www.dhnh.org), the Maryland Dental Action Coalition at [www.mdc.org](http://www.mdc.org), the Maryland State Dental Association at [www.msda.com](http://www.msda.com), the Maryland Academy of General Dentistry at [www.magd.org](http://www.magd.org), the Maryland Dental Society, [themds.org](http://themds.org), the Maryland Dental Hygiene Association and The Children's Oral Health Institute [www.mycchi.org](http://www.mycchi.org).