

SAMPLE TESTIMONY

February 29, 2012

**The Honorable Joan Carter Conway
Chairwoman, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991**

Dear Senator Conway:

Thank you Senator Conway and members of the committee for affording us this opportunity to express the passion of the dental community to you for oral health education in Maryland public schools and for our support of SB 867.

My name is Dr. _____ I am currently a practicing pediatric dentist. I practiced in Baltimore city for 13 years and have been practicing in Owings mills for the last 12 years. I am the CEO and director of development of the nonprofit, The Children's Oral Health Institute organization. I am a member of the Maryland Dental Society (MDS), Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA), and Maryland Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (MAPD).

In 1988, I began treating hundreds of children each year. Hundreds of children that had tooth decayed all throughout their mouths; some with every tooth decayed. Not a lot has changed in 25 years. I quickly realized in 1988 that, neither I nor my colleagues would ever fill every tooth, extract all that needed extracting, crown all that needed a crown. What I realized of this dental disease we were treating day after day, child after yet another child, and yet another, is that families needed to understand that this is a disease caused by diet. That this is a disease that is preventable and that this disease can become so severe that you cannot function. It can render you

helpless; balled up in fetal position, screaming in pain. How many of you in this room can attest to this kind of suffering from a single toothache.

- 1) **[Slide]** Children with facial swelling - I cannot imagine how our children can be expected to sit in classrooms and be expected to learn.
- 2) **[Slide]** Image of tooth decay – this is what the mouth of these children may look like. This is what we, especially pediatric dentist see and treat every day. They are living with excruciating pain, inability to eat poor self esteem .
- 3) **[Slide]** Image of child with his head down on the desk – we need the help of one of our most powerful weapons -teachers

Members of the MDS, MSDA, and MAGD and MDAPD do their part throughout the year and during National Children’s Dental Health Month to expand efforts to educated children and families about good oral health care and proper dietary choices. We go into school and present educational programs and give out toothbrush and toothpaste and more. But more is needed as we in Maryland realized in 2007 not only because of the death of our 12 year-old Deamonte Driver here in Maryland but because of 6 year-old Alexander Colander who dropped dead in front of his classmates on a school bus ride home in Mississippi. [Slides] 4. head on the desk, 5. cycle of pain, 6. list of deaths.

Clearly there is truth in the saying that what you eat can kill you. The management of food intake affects all of our organs and the teeth, all 52, are not exclude. Recent studies link oral infections with diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, and erectile dysfunction, premature and low-weight births.

If we teach physical education we can incorporate oral health education into classroom instruction. **[Slide 7]**

Oral health is often taken for granted, but it is an essential part of our everyday lives. Good oral health enhances our ability to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow, and convey our feelings and emotions through facial expressions. However, oral diseases, which range from cavities to oral cancer, cause pain and disability for millions of Americans each year.

Please take time to closely review *Code Red: The Oral Health Crisis In Your Classroom* and all of the materials we have provided in your packages today. We hope you will wear your lapel pins and help us, help Maryland to tell the nation “Oral Health Can’t Wait.”

This is an exciting time for both the Maryland department of education and organized dentistry in our state. We want to do all that we can to help ensure oral health legislation that will especially make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families living in poverty and for those who are disproportionately affected by dental disease. Most of the time this disproportion translates into children who live in poverty all throughout the state and who are suffering with acute and chronic dental pain. The MDS greatly appreciates that all children attending public schools will be exposed to the educational support they need with the passage of this legislation. **[Slide/video 8]**

Thank you for all of the hard work you do to improve the lives of Marylanders. [Slide 9] We are eager to have your favorable report for SB 867.

Sincerely,
