Oral Health Education Legislation Talking Points

- ✓ On February 25, 200**7**, a 12 year-old Maryland boy named Deamonte Driver died from untreated tooth decay.
- ✓ Ignoring oral health problems can lead to needless pain and suffering, causing devastating complications to an individual's well-being, with financial and social cost that significantly diminishes quality of life and burden American society.
- ✓ Over 108 million children and adults lack dental insurance, which is over 2.5 times the numbers who lack medical insurance.
- ✓ Oral diseases and tooth decay are progressive and cumulative and become more complex over time.
- ✓ Dental caries (tooth decay) is the single most common chronic childhood disease five (5) times more common than asthma and seven (7) times more common than hay fever.
- ✓ Over 50% of five to nine year-olds children have at least one cavity or filling, and that proportion increases to 78% among 17 year-olds.
- ✓ Tobacco-related oral lesions are prevalent in adolescents who currently use smokeless (spit) tobacco.
- ✓ 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness.
- ✓ Pain and suffering due to untreated diseases can lead to problems eating, speaking and attending to learning.
- ✓ Employed adults lose more than 164 million hours of work each year due to dental disease or dental visits.
- ✓ Oral-facial pain, as a symptom of untreated dental and oral problems and as a condition in and of itself, is a major source of diminished quality of life. It is associated with sleep deprivation, depression, and multiple adverse psychosocial outcomes.
- ✓ Safe and effective measures exist to prevent the most common dental diseases-dental caries and periodontal diseases.

- ✓ There are a variety of ways to access oral health education products and materials for the classroom from toothpaste and toothbrush manufacturers, health care facilities and insurance companies, local health departments and the Maryland Department of Health and Human Services Office of Oral Health (Maryland State Oral Health Plan) to aid with the incorporation of oral health education during school hours and education at home.
- ✓ Maryland Department of Health and Human Services Office of Oral Health will introduce the Maryland Oral Health Literacy Plan on March 22, 2012. The Maryland Dental Action Coalition will help to ensure the success of educating families about the importance of good oral health throughout life via the Oral Health Literacy Plan.
- ✓ The Children's Oral Health Institute has effective curriculum resources for teachers to help make the incorporation of oral health education lessons a seamless effort in routine classroom instruction.
- ✓ 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.
 - The use of the emergency room is a well-known mode of entry into the dental health care system for patients without a usual source of dental care, and for children younger than 6 years of age with advanced carious lesions. JADA 2012; 143, (1):59-65.

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