

BILL: House Bill 290
TITLE: Public Health - Dental Services - Access
DATE: February 14, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports Senate Bill 237 with an amendment to remove the requirements for parents and guardians to report their children's dental visits to public schools.

Local boards of education appreciate the importance of dental health in the lives of our nearly 900,000 students. However, MABE does not support the requirement that schools collect all of the dental visit verifications required by this bill for all six, nine, and 12 year olds. The focus of the bill on expanding family and student access to dental health services through programs administered by the Maryland Department Health. Therefore, it would appear to be more appropriate for dentists to provide verification of all dental screenings directly to state health officials in order to inform public health policy.

Local school systems are actively engaged in promoting and advancing the health of our students through a number of programs. However, these programs and standards typically relate to services that can reasonably be provided through outside providers on school premises, such as vision screening, or involve the array of communicable diseases addressed through vaccination requirements linked to school admission. Other significant student health issues are addressed through legislation governing students with chronic conditions such as diabetes or sickle cell disease, and involve the role of school nurses and other school staff. MABE has often supported legislative initiatives in these student health areas.

By contrast, this legislation would require schools to implement an information gathering and record keeping system without any clear connection to any school system role in the provision of dental health services. Again, MABE certainly recognizes the importance of the State's continued efforts to ensure that children are receiving dental health services. Although the overwhelming majority of students do receive routine dental care, problematic gaps in coverage do exist. MABE believes that Senate Bill 237 is intended to make meaningful improvements in the provision of children's dental health services, and will continue to do so without mandating the enormous statewide dental record reporting and retention requirement for public schools proposed by this bill.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 237 with an amendment to strike lines 20 through 31 on page one of the bill to remove the requirements for parents and guardians to provide verification of their students' dental visits to their students' school.