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August 2026

MDAC Releases 2026-2030 State Oral Health Plan

Third state plan builds on achievements; provides blueprint for continued progress

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) is pleased to announce the release of the [Maryland Oral Health Plan 2026–2030 \(MOHP\)](#), a five-year roadmap for improving oral health for all Marylanders.

Building on the progress made since Maryland's first statewide oral health plan was introduced in 2011, the updated MOHP identifies ongoing challenges and outlines strategies to expand access to oral health care, prevent oral disease and injury, and improve the overall health and well-being of Maryland residents. The Plan provides a framework for collective action across the state and includes 14 strategic goals designed to be intentionally flexible, allowing communities and regions to develop innovative implementation strategies that reflect their unique needs and priorities.



The release of the updated MOHP marks an important milestone—and the beginning of the next chapter in advancing oral health across Maryland. MDAC will work with stakeholders statewide to move the Plan from vision to action, beginning with a thought leadership webinar in September. The webinar will formally introduce the Plan, engage stakeholders in shaping implementation strategies, and build momentum toward achieving its goals.

In the months ahead, MDAC will broadly share the MOHP with our network, partners, stakeholders, and community groups across the state.

Success will depend on the collaboration, commitment, and collective action of partners and stakeholders across Maryland. Together, we can turn this roadmap into meaningful action and create lasting improvements in oral health for all Marylanders.

Gratitude and Appreciation

MDAC is deeply grateful to the Maryland Department of Health for its generous financial support of the development and production of the [Maryland State Oral Health Plan 2026–2030](#).

MDAC also extends its sincere appreciation to the plan's senior reviewers, **Debony Hughes, DDS**, Director of the Office of Oral Health at the Maryland Department of Health, and **Katy Battani, RDH, MS**, Deputy Director of the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center at Georgetown University. We are grateful for their time, expertise, and thoughtful guidance throughout the review process.

MDAC further recognizes the outstanding leadership and significant contributions of the plan committee chairs: **Robyn Elliott** (Access to Care); **Dushanka Kleinman, DDS, MScD**, and **Alice Horowitz, RDH, MA, PhD** (Oral Health Literacy and Education); and **Oluwatoyin M. Fatogun, DDS** (Oral Disease and Prevention). Their dedication, leadership, and expertise were instrumental in developing a comprehensive assessment of oral health in Maryland and shaping a strategic plan that establishes the goals and objectives needed to advance oral health as an essential component of overall health and achieve optimal oral health for all Marylanders.

[Download the Maryland State Oral Health Plan 2026–2030](#)

Share Your Voice

We invite you to complete our survey and share more about the work you are doing to improve oral health in your community. Your feedback will help inform implementation efforts, identify opportunities for collaboration, and strengthen collective action to advance oral health across Maryland.

[Complete the MOHP Engagement Survey](#)

Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program

Oral Health programs awarded in first round of funding to expand access to care

On August 10, Governor Moore announced the Maryland Department of Health, in collaboration with the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission and the Maryland Health Care Commission, awarded \$80 million in grant funding for the first year of Maryland's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) to strengthen and expand access to primary care, behavioral health care and dental care while also innovating to improve the quality of care delivered and reduce costs to the overall healthcare system. These efforts are estimated to expand services to tens of thousands of additional rural Marylanders.

The Maryland RHTP focuses on three key areas of impact: (1) transforming the rural health workforce, (2) promoting sustainable access and innovative care for rural Marylanders, and (3) empowering rural Marylanders to eat for health.

Announced by Governor Moore on August 10, the grants were awarded through Pillar 2 of the program, Promote Sustainable Access and Innovative Care for Rural Marylanders. Five organization recipients, all familiar to Maryland's oral health community, are demonstrating innovative approaches to expanding access to dental care in rural communities across the state:



- **Allegany Health**

Department: This project aims to modernize data infrastructure and address health disparities in rural Maryland through the implementation of a meaningful use Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, a specialized EHR module designed for inpatient substance use disorder facilities within the Behavioral Health divisions of Allegany and Kent counties, dental practice management software platform and closed-loop referrals.

- **Charles County Department of Health (CCDOH):** CCDOH project aims to establish an integrated rural oral healthcare model to address provider shortages, transportation barriers, and high costs through expansion of preventive, restorative, and specialty care; and care coordination. A centerpiece of the initiative is the development of in-house digital denture services, including 3D-printed dentures, within the CCDOH Dental Program. The digital workflow is designed to shorten production time, reduce per-unit costs, improve clinical efficiency, and allow adjustments to be made in the same facility where patients receive their dental care. The project offers a model that may be useful to other rural and safety-net dental programs facing similar barriers to delivery of care. By combining technology, public health infrastructure, patient navigation, and local partnerships, Charles County is working to bring essential specialty dental care closer to the residents who need it. Additional information can be found [here](#).

- **Choptank Community Health System:** The project seeks to transition from a reactive, fee-for-service model to a proactive, value-based care system to improve health outcomes and reduce total cost of care. Key components include expansion of CHW workforce, mobile health, specialty dental services, integrated care, and remote patient monitoring.

- **Mountain Laurel Medical Center (MLMC):** The project aims to expand access to dental care for underserved residents of Garrett and Allegany counties. Through its Rural Integrated Oral Health Access Initiative, MLMC will establish a three-operator dental program integrated into its existing healthcare delivery system, expanding access to preventive and restorative services and increasing the availability of Medicaid-participating dental care in Western Maryland. Funding will support dental staffing, equipment and operator development, technology and care coordination, and startup operations, helping MLMC build a sustainable model for rural oral healthcare and reduce longstanding barriers to dental care in the region.

- **West Cecil Health Center:** The project at West Cecil Health Center aims to integrate primary care, behavioral health, and dentistry with care management and nutrition and pharmacy services. Expanding dental services to our Elkton location will greatly improve our community's access to oral health care, including preventive, emergency, and basic restorative dental services. As part of this expansion, West Cecil Health Center has welcomed a new dentist to help provide high-quality dental treatment at our Conowingo and Elkton locations.

Senator Alsobrooks Acts to Close Gaps in Dental Coverage

Maryland Senator joins congressional colleague on three bills addressing barriers to care

On July 22, Maryland Senator Angela Alsobrooks (D) joined colleague, Congresswoman Nanette Barragán (D-Calif.-44), to introduce three critical bills to close historical gaps in dental coverage across the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, and Medicare. These bills will ensure that children, low-income adults, and seniors can access necessary dental care without facing the barriers of caps and optional benefits.

- The Ensuring Kids Have Access to Medically Necessary Dental Care Act strengthens CHIP by banning annual and lifetime dollar limits in children's dental benefits and requiring wraparound coverage where it is currently optional. Read the bill [here](#).
- The Medicaid Dental Benefit Act of 2026 makes adult dental care a mandatory Medicaid benefit rather than a state-by-state option with full federal funding for the first three years. Read the bill [here](#).
- The Medicare Dental Benefit Act of 2026 would add routine, basic, major, and emergency dental coverage to Medicare Part B, reducing the disparities that leave half of all Medicare beneficiaries without dental coverage today. Read the bill [here](#).



In a press release issued on the day the three bills were introduced, Senator Alsobrooks underscored Maryland's firsthand experience with the devastating consequences of inadequate access to dental care. She pointed to the tragic death of a 12-year-old Maryland child after an untreated toothache, describing it as a preventable tragedy that should never have occurred. Senator Alsobrooks reaffirmed her commitment to expanding access to dental coverage and ensuring that every American—especially every child—can receive the dental care they need.

MDAC is deeply grateful to Senator Alsobrooks for taking up the mantle of Senator Ben Cardin's extraordinary work, emerging as a national leader on this critical issue. Her advocacy on oral health care will carry forward Senator Cardin's enduring legacy by advancing equitable access to dental services to improve the lives of Marylanders while creating lasting change for millions of people across the country.

Read full text of Senator Alsobrooks' press release

H.R. 2001, the Action for Dental Health Act, was reintroduced on March 10, 2025, by U.S. Representatives Robin Kelly (D-IL) and Mike Simpson (R-ID). The bipartisan legislation calls for reauthorization of the federal grant program for addressing dental workforce needs by amending Section 340G(f) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. § 256g(f)) to increase the program's authorized funding to \$15 million annually for FY26-30, with funds remaining available until expended.

Under the bill, states could continue to receive grants to develop and implement innovative oral health workforce initiatives designed to improve access to dental care in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. Authorized activities include expanding dental residency programs, recruiting and retaining dentists, supporting loan repayment, faculty recruitment and developing programs that increase access to care in rural and other underserved communities.

The U.S. House of Representatives' Energy and Commerce Committee unanimously approved H.R. 2001 in May 2026, advancing the measure to the full House. On July 22, 2026, the House passed the bill by the two-thirds vote required under suspension of the rules. The legislation now awaits consideration in the Senate.

The following article was submitted by the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health.



Dr. Debony Hughes, New President-elect for the Association for State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD)



Earlier this year at the National Oral Health Conference, Debony Hughes, DDS, was installed as the President-elect for the Association for State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD). ASTDD is a national, non-profit organization representing state and territorial oral health program directors and their staff. As President-elect, Dr. Hughes - a current ASTDD Board Member - serves for a term of two years and becomes President of ASTDD in April 2027. Dr. Hughes is the first African-American woman to hold the office. Dr. Hughes is the director of the Office of Oral Health at the Maryland Department of Health. She is a graduate of Howard University College of Dentistry and has built a long and meaningful career improving the oral health of Marylanders, first as Dental Director for the Prince George's County Health Department and currently as the State's oral public health leader.

As ASTDD President-elect, Dr. Hughes will work to formulate and promote sound national oral health policy, increase awareness of oral health issues, and help in the development of initiatives for the prevention and control of oral diseases. Her efforts will also advance health equity, integrate oral and overall health, and promote evidence-based practice and policies throughout the nation.

"No one. No child, adult, or senior should have to choose between affording groceries or being able to have access to dental treatment. I am so proud to be introducing three bills to address this issue and to finally ensure quality, affordable access to dental care for Marylanders – and all Americans."

The Honorable Angela Alsobrooks, Democratic Senator for Maryland. July 22, 2026, [Press Release](#). Office of U.S. Senator Angela Alsobrooks

NEWS & RESOURCES

Access to Care

[Finding Dental Care That Works for You: An Oral Health Resource Guide](#)

[Finding Dental Care That Works for You: An Oral Health Resource Guide \(Spanish\)](#)

Fluoride

[Campaign for Dental Health](#)

[Fluoridation: Science and Facts](#)

Maternal and Child Oral Health

[Oral Health Care During Pregnancy. A National Consensus Statement](#)

Medicaid

[State Reporting Requirements Outlined in the Paperwork Reduction Act for Medicaid Work Reporting Requirements](#)

[Community Health Centers and Medicaid: A Critical Partnership for Patient Care](#)

[A Summary of Federal Medicaid Work Requirements](#)

RESOURCE: Provider Enrollment Flyer

To learn how Maryland dental providers can enroll in the Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program and resources provided, [review this enrollment flyer](#) and share with others!

Legislative Contacts

[U.S. Senators \(MD\)](#)

[U.S. Representatives \(MD\)](#)

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

Meetings/ Events/ Webinars

[ADHA 2026 Annual Conference The Heart of Hygiene September 26-28, 2026 Ft. Worth, Texas](#)

[National Academy for State Health Policy September 28-30, 2026](#)

[ADA Urges CMS to Recognize Adult Dental Coverage as an Essential Health Benefit](#)

Oral Health Integration

[Community Health Centers Integrating Oral Health as Part of Comprehensive Primary Care](#)

[Best Practice Approach: Integrating Oral Health Care into Primary Care](#)

[Primary Care Providers Help Expand Oral Health Through National Training Initiative](#)

Prevention

[Policy Statement Silver Diamine Fluoride: A Non-Restorative Treatment for Dental Decay](#)

Rural Health Transformation Fund

[Maryland Department of Health Announces \\$80 Million in First Round of Rural Health Transformation Program Awards](#)

[Medical Systems, Health Agencies Get \\$80 Million From Feds to Boost Rural Health](#)

[H.R. 1 Funding Cuts Will Overshadow Gains from Rural Health Program](#)

Workforce

[The Role of Community Health Workers in Oral Health](#)

[New York Community Health Worker Reimbursement and Sustainability Learning Collaborative](#)

[Federal Loan Cap May Put Dental School Out of Reach for Some Students](#)

[New York Hilton Midtown New York, NY](#)

[Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers Annual Conference](#)
[October 8-9, 2026](#)
[Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort](#)
[Cambridge, MD](#)

[National Network for Oral Health Access Conference](#)
[October 25-28, 2026](#)
[Seattle, WA](#)

[National Oral Health Conference](#)
[April 10-14, 2027](#)
[Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch](#)
[St. Louis, MO](#)

[Families USA Health Action Conference](#)
[January 21-22, 2027](#)
[Capital Hilton](#)
[Washington, DC](#)



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CONTACT

Do you have events or announcements you'd like to share? Contact MDAC, and we'll make every effort to include them in our next newsletter, as space permits.

Contact MDAC

JOIN

MDAC is statewide coalition of clinical care providers, governments, non-profits, academic institutions, managed care organizations, foundations and associations working collaboratively to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care.

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www.mdac.us

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