

RESTORING MASSHEALTH ADULT DENTAL BENEFITS

H.1917/S.1212: An Act Relative to the Restoration of MassHealth Adult Dental Benefits

Bill Sponsors: Representative Kevin Honan and Senator Harriette Chandler

The Massachusetts Dental Society believes that oral health is an integral part of overall health and should be covered fully by MassHealth.

BACKGROUND

- Full dental coverage for adults on MassHealth has waxed and waned since 2002, causing significant decreases in access to effective oral health care.
- Currently, MassHealth only provides partial adult dental coverage, which leads to needless pain, suffering, and illness.
- Important dental services that are vital for good oral health and saving teeth are not currently covered by MassHealth. Left untreated, dental disease can lead to systemic infection, hospitalization, and the worsening of other medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Cuts to dental care lead to extensive and costly services in emergency and inpatient hospital settings, which wastes millions of dollars and adds costs to MassHealth and the Health Safety Net.
- Oral disease is directly responsible for an estimated 164 million work hours lost each year in the United States. Good oral health enhances MassHealth beneficiaries' ability to obtain and keep jobs.
- Maintaining good oral and dental hygiene can help prevent bad breath, tooth decay, and gum disease, and can help adults keep their teeth as they get older.

KEY PROVISIONS

- This legislation would require the Division of Medical Assistance to cover all dental services that were included in the state plan or demonstration program in effect on January 1, 2002.
- The legislation would restore full MassHealth dental benefits to more than 1 million individuals, including more than 113,000 seniors and 230,000 people living with disabilities.

The Massachusetts Dental Society urges the legislature to pass ***An Act Relative to the Restoration of MassHealth Adult Dental Benefits*** to reinstate full MassHealth coverage of adult dental benefits to improve the oral health of Massachusetts residents.

Questions can be directed to:

Advocacy@massdental.org
Massachusetts Dental Society
508.480.9797

The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) represents approximately 5,000 dentists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (about 80 percent of dentists). A statewide constituent of the American Dental Association, the MDS is dedicated to the professional development of its members through initiatives in education, advocacy, the promotion of the highest professional standards, and championing oral health in the Commonwealth.