



MDAC BIENNIAL ORAL HEALTH SUMMIT

Innovation, Advocacy, Action: Shaping Maryland's Oral Health Future

**Monday, November 17, 2025
Turf Valley Resort
Ellicott City, Maryland**

8:30am – 9:00am Registration and Networking

Check in and meet other attendees before the day kicks off.

9:00am - 9:10am Welcome Remarks

Speaker: Mary Backley
Chief Executive Officer
Maryland Dental Action Coalition

Kick off the day with a welcome from Mary Backley, Maryland Dental Action Coalition's CEO. Learn what to expect during the Summit, and strategies for making the most of the day.

9:10am - 9:30am Opening Keynote Presentation

Speaker: Meg Sullivan, MD, MPH
Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services
Maryland Department of Health

Dr. Meg Sullivan, Maryland's Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services, will open the day by providing an update on how recent federal actions and policy shifts will reshape Maryland's health landscape. She will address the significant potential changes to Medicaid and programs that the MDAC oral health network has worked diligently on over the past several years to secure, including the Medicaid adult dental expansion and the Healthy Babies Equity Act. Attendees will also gain insight into how these developments intersect the Maryland Department of Health's current priorities. The session will highlight how MDAC's broad and diverse network can play a critical role in partnership with the Department to drive access to dental care and improved health outcomes for all Marylanders.

9:30am - 10:30am Plenary: *How Big Bold Advocacy Will Save Medicaid*

Moderator:

Ann Ciekot
Partner and Director of Strategic
Partnerships, Public Policy
Partners

Panelists:

Melissa Burroughs
Senior Director of Public Policy
CareQuest Institute for Oral
Health

Kevin Lindamood, MSW
President and CEO
Health Care for the Homeless

Robyn Elliott
Policy and Governmental Affairs
Consultant for MDAC
Managing Partner
Public Policy Partners

As Maryland navigates budget shortfalls and an evolving federal policy landscape, what must be done to protect and strengthen our Medicaid programs that support availability and access to oral health care? This timely panel brings together national and state advocates to explore how we can build a united front in support of Maryland Medical Assistance Programs. Speakers will reflect on past challenges, share lessons learned, and offer strategic guidance for collective action in the face of today's uncertainty—and tomorrow's future.

10:30am - 10:45 am Break

10:45am - 11:45am Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1a: *Improving Children's Oral Health Through School Based Programs: Future opportunities and lessons learned*

Moderator:

Uma S. Ahluwalia, MPH, MSW
Director
Leapp Strategies LLC

Panelists:

Christina Bartz, PAC, MMS
Director, Community Based
Programs
Choptank Community Health
Systems, Inc

Elizabeth Elliott, MSN, RN, CDCES,
NCSN
President
Maryland Association of School
Health Nurses

Ambyr Klink, CPNP-PC, MSN,
BSN, RN
Program Supervisor of School-
Based Wellness Centers
Howard County Health
Department

Phylicia Porter, MPH, MSL
Member, City Council, Baltimore,
representing District 10
Chair, Public Health and
Environment Committee

Recent data from the 2022/2023 Oral Health Survey of Maryland School Children reveals a troubling rise in untreated dental decay, with 21% of students affected, up from 14% in the previous survey in 2015/2016. Alarmingly, 30% of students in the recent survey required early follow-up or urgent care due to pain or infection. This panel will explore the critical role that school-based health centers and oral health initiatives can play in addressing these health issues. Panelists will share what's currently happening in schools, discuss effective strategies to improve student oral health, and offer ways attendees can support stronger, more accessible oral health programs in school settings.

Breakout 1b: *Why Help? Students and Early Career Dental Professionals Share Perspectives on Practicing in Underserved Communities*

Moderator:

Debony Hughes, DDS
Director, Office of Oral Health
Maryland Department of Health

Panelists:

Jena Baguyos
Dental Hygienist Student
University of Maryland School of
Dentistry

Emily Chaffer
Dental Hygienist Student
University of Maryland School of
Dentistry

Ryan Witte
4th Year Dental Student
University of Maryland School of
Dentistry

Allison Cates
4th Year Dental Student
University of Maryland School of
Dentistry

Bahar Boroumand Rad, DDS
Pediatric Dental Resident
NYU Langone at Chesapeake
Health Care

Crystal Smith, DMD
Pediatric Dental Resident
NYU Langone at Chesapeake
Health Care

Hear directly from the next generation of oral health professionals featuring recipients of the Pathways to Bright Futures Academic Award and other early career dental professionals. Panelists will share what inspires them to serve underserved communities, how they envision their future in the field, and what challenges and opportunities they see ahead. Attendees will gain unique insights from these future providers and learn

how the Pathways to Bright Futures program is helping to build a diverse and dynamic dental workforce, improve oral health equity, and increase the number of dental professionals practicing in Maryland Dental Health Provider Shortage Areas.

12:00pm-12:45pm Buffet Lunch and Networking

Join us for a buffet lunch and connect with other Summit attendees. Catch up with colleagues and meet partners in the MDAC community.

12:45pm-1:30pm Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Oral Health Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin will receive the inaugural Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Oral Health Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award. This distinguished recognition was established this year to honor Senator Cardin's years of advocacy and leadership in the state of Maryland and nationally. In the future, it will be presented to an individual whose years of collective advocacy work in oral health has secured change in health policies and systems for lasting impact. The inaugural award will be presented by Maryland legislators who cosponsored and supported legislation to establish Maryland Medical Assistance – Dental Coverage for Adults, Senator Malcolm Augustine, Senator Mike McKay, Delegate Heather Bagnall, and Delegate Bonnie Cullison.

1:45pm-2:45pm Breakout sessions

Breakout 2a: *How Maryland Can Address the Dental Hygienist Shortage*

Moderator:

Robyn Elliott
Policy and Governmental Affairs
Consultant for MDAC
Managing Director
Public Policy Partners

Panelists:

Katy Battani, RDH, MS
Deputy Director
National Maternal and Child Oral
Health Resource Center
Georgetown University

Shavonne Healy, MSDH, RDH,
Founder and CEO
A Higher Leaning, LLC

Ariana Kelly
Executive Director
Maryland Commission for Women

Between 2019 and 2023, Maryland experienced a 10% decrease in its dental hygiene workforce (Source: ADA, Health Policy Institute). This

trend is straining oral health care access across the state. This panel will explore the causes and consequences of the dental hygienist shortage and discuss actionable strategies to strengthen the workforce. Panelists will highlight promising approaches from other states, lessons learned from Maryland's efforts to expand nursing capacity, and the unique impact on public health dental settings.

Breakout 2b: *Community Health Workers at Work: Policy Wins, Oral Health Integration, and Future Opportunities*

Moderator:

Evelyn B. Kelly, MPH
Director, Strategic Initiatives
Institute for Public Health
Innovation

Panelists:

Delegate Heather Bagnall
D-Anne Arundel County, District 33
Maryland General Assembly

Stephanie Brown
Community Health Worker
Co-Founder
Maryland Community Health Worker
Association

Elizabeth Chung, MS, Public Health
Executive Director
Asian American Center of Frederick

Michael E. Rhein, MPA
President & CEO
Institute for Public Health Innovation

Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a vital role connecting individuals to care, building trust, and improving health outcomes across Maryland. This panel will explore how CHWs are making an impact statewide, with a focus on how oral health is being integrated into their work. Panelists will highlight recent policy and programmatic wins for the CHW workforce in Maryland and other states, share on-the-ground successes, and discuss future opportunities to further elevate and support CHWs as essential partners in advancing health equity.

2:45pm-3:00pm

Break

3:00pm-3:45pm

Closing Plenary: Fluoride – Protecting a Proven Public Health Tool

Speaker: Chelsea Fosse, DMD, MPH
Vice President, Research and Policy Center
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

National public and political discourse around community water fluoridation has shifted dramatically in recent years, driven by inaccurate information and growing skepticism. In this closing session, we will celebrate Maryland municipalities' long-time commitment to using fluoride

in community water as a tool to improve oral health, making our state one of the top ranked in the nation for this key health indicator. Dr. Chelsea Fosse will review evidence supporting the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation, discuss the potential health consequences of its removal, and share practical strategies for engaging families, communities, and policymakers in conversation about this important public health measure.

3:45pm to 4:00pm Closing

Hear brief closing remarks, key themes and closing reflections on the day.

4:00pm – 5:00pm Networking Reception

Stay for a networking reception, where you can connect with fellow attendees, speakers, and oral health leaders from across Maryland. Enjoy light refreshments as you build new partnerships, exchange ideas, and celebrate our shared commitment to oral health in our communities.