

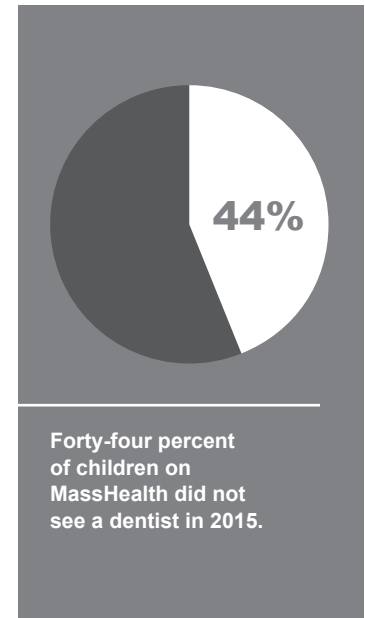
# SD1169/HB2474: Expanding Dental Access in Massachusetts

Sponsored by Senator Harriette Chandler and Representatives Smitty Pignatelli and Kate Hogan

## SD1169/HB2474 would authorize dental therapists in Massachusetts to improve access to dental care for people who need it.

Currently there is a lack of dental care for children, seniors, and people with special needs

- More than 530,000 people in Massachusetts live in areas with a shortage of dentists.<sup>1</sup>
- 44% of children (ages 1 to 20) on MassHealth—over 284,000 kids—did not see a dentist in 2015.<sup>2</sup>
- Most dentists in Massachusetts do not accept Medicaid.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, only 35% of dentists treated a MassHealth patient and only 26% billed at least \$10,000 to MassHealth.<sup>4</sup>



## Disparities in oral health persist

- According to the Health Policy Commission, there were 36,060 preventable oral health emergency department (ED) visits in 2014, costing \$14.8 to \$36 million.<sup>5</sup> MassHealth was the primary payer (48.8%) of these visits.<sup>6</sup>
- In 2014, low-income seniors were seven times more likely to have lost all their teeth than seniors with household incomes exceeding \$75,000. African-American seniors were twice as likely as their white counterparts to have lost all their teeth.<sup>7</sup>
- Adults with disabilities were three times more likely than non-disabled adults to be missing six or more teeth in 2014.<sup>8</sup>

## Dental therapy is a solution to improve access and cost-efficient care

- **Dental therapists** are dental hygienists who—after completing additional training—would be able to deliver basic but critically necessary care to underserved populations in the state and would work under the supervision of a dentist.
- **Dental therapists** are similar to physician assistants and offer an accessible, cost-efficient option for preventative and restorative treatment. Dental therapists are a progressive solution to remedy current access-to-care barriers underserved populations face. Dental therapists are licensed to practice in Minnesota, Maine, and Vermont, and have been successful in Alaska for the past decade, increasing access for 40,000 people living in rural communities.<sup>9</sup>

For additional information, contact Bryan Barash (Bryan.Barash@masenate.gov) or Gena Frank (Eugenia.Frank@mahouse.gov).

## Supporters of SD1169/HB2474

AARP Massachusetts  
The ARC of Massachusetts  
Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers  
Autism Housing Pathways  
Boston College Immigration Integration Lab  
Boston Foundation  
Cambridge Health Alliance  
Commonwealth Care Alliance  
Community Catalyst  
Disabled American Veterans Department  
of Massachusetts  
The Forsyth Institute  
Harvard School of Dental Medicine  
Health Care for All  
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts  
Health Imperatives  
Hillcrest Dental Care, Inc.  
IMPRINT Project  
Jewish Community Relations Council of  
Greater Boston  
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts  
Lynn Economic Opportunity, Inc.  
Massachusetts Adult Day Services Association  
Massachusetts Association for Mental Health  
Massachusetts Association for School-Based  
Health Care

Massachusetts Coalition for Oral Health  
Massachusetts Dental Hygienists Association  
Massachusetts Home Care Association  
Massachusetts Hospital Association  
Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance  
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee  
Advocacy Coalition  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Massachusetts National Organization for Women  
Massachusetts Public Health Association  
Massachusetts School Nurses Organization  
Senior Action Council  
Massachusetts Senior Care Association  
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Children  
Mount Ida College  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
of Massachusetts  
Partners for a Healthier Community  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
Revere CARES  
Stand for Children Massachusetts  
Union of Minority Neighborhoods

- 
- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, "Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics" (as of Dec. 8, 2016).
  - 2 This figure counts children ages 1 to 20 eligible for the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Benefit (Medicaid's mandatory health benefit for children) for 90 continuous days and who received any dental service. See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Annual EPSDT Participation Report, Form CMS-416 (State) Fiscal Year: 2015, accessed Sept. 7, 2016, <http://www.medicaid.gov/Medicaid-CHIP-Program-Information/By-Topics/Benefits/Early-and-Periodic-Screening-Diagnostic-and-Treatment.html>.
  - 3 Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Health Professions Data Series Dentist 2012 (November 2014), <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/com-health/primary-care/dentist-factsheet.pdf>.
  - 4 Calculated as a percentage of professionally active dentists in Massachusetts. Kaiser Family Foundation, "State Health Facts: Professionally Active Dentists" (as of September 2014); Data from the American Dental Association via Redi-Data, Inc.; MassHealth data from Tracy Gilman, Executive Director, MassHealth, DentaQuest via email to The Pew Charitable Trusts, Jan. 22, 2016.
  - 5 Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, "Oral Health Policy Brief," (August 2016), <http://www.mass.gov/anf/budget-taxes-and-procurement/oversight-agencies/health-policy-commission/publications/oral-health-policy-brief.pdf>.
  - 6 Ibid.
  - 7 Ta-wei Lin, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, unpublished data from the 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, email to The Pew Charitable Trusts, Feb. 10, 2016.
  - 8 Massachusetts Department of Public Health, "A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Adults, 2014: Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System" (August 2015), <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/behavioral-risk/report-2014.pdf>.
  - 9 Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and W.K. Kellogg Foundation, "Press Release: Alaska Dental Health Aide Therapists Mark 10 Years in Practice, Expanding Access to Dental Care for 40,000 Alaska Native People" (June 4, 2014).