

**TESTIMONY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DENTAL SOCIETY BEFORE THE JOINT
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH**

May 7, 2019

**S. 1212/H.1917 – AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE RESTORATION OF MASSHEALTH ADULT
DENTAL BENEFITS**

The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) supports Senate Bill 1212 and House Bill 1917, An Act Relative to the Restoration of MassHealth Adult Dental Benefits. The MDS represents approximately 80% of dentists in the Commonwealth through initiatives in education, advocacy, and promotion of the highest professional standards. As the leading authority on oral health care in the Commonwealth, we take great pride in championing oral health and lending the voice of dentistry to worthy initiatives that can make a difference in the lives of residents across the Bay State.

The MDS believes that oral health is an integral part of overall health and should be covered fully by MassHealth. Since 2002, full dental coverage for adults on MassHealth has waxed and waned, causing significant decreases in access to effective oral health care. 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. Furthermore, oral disease is directly responsible for an estimated 164 million work hours lost each year in the United States. Currently, MassHealth only provides partial adult dental coverage, which leads to needless pain, suffering, and illness.

If passed, this legislation would require the Division of Medical Assistance to cover all dental services, which include endodontic and prosthodontic services – root canals and crowns. This 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 MDS 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.