

# Advancing Oral Health Equity

People who are younger, white, middle- to high-income, and living in urban areas are more likely to have access and utilize dental services than those who are older, people of color, low-income, and rural residents.

## Poor oral health could lead to ...



Unemployment



Missing Teeth



Mouth Cancer



Heart Disease



Diabetes



Lung Conditions

## Current Oral Health Disparities in TN

- ➔ TN is 1 of 3 states that do not provide dental benefits to adults with Medicaid
- ➔ Many dentists cluster in higher-income areas and specialize in high-cost procedures
- ➔ Only 30% of dentists in TN accept Medicaid (which only covers children)
- ➔ More than 2.3 million Tennesseans live in designated dental HPSA (health professional shortage areas)

## Policies to Increase Access and Improve Oral Health

- ➔ Support a diverse pipeline of new dentists who come from underserved populations, who are most likely to return to their communities and provide dental care
- ➔ Integrate dentistry into primary care & teledentistry
- ➔ Focus on value-based care in dentistry to incentivize preventive care and better oral health outcomes and reduce more costly, ineffective care, while ensuring that providers do not restrict their patient population to include only the healthiest patients
- ➔ Mandate dental benefits for all enrollees of all ages, and the Affordable Care Act should add dental care as an essential health benefit