



The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Chair, Senate Education, Health and
Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 13, 2020

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 440 – PHARMACISTS – AIDS FOR THE
CESSATION OF TOBACCO PRODUCT USE**

Dear Chairs Pinsky and Kelley:

The Maryland Dental Hygienists Association (MDHA) is an organization seeking to improve the public's total health by advancing the art and science of dental hygiene, including ensuring access to quality oral health care, increasing awareness of the cost-effective benefits of preventative dental services, promoting the highest standards of dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research, and representing and promoting the interests of dental hygienists in Maryland. In keeping with that mission, MDHA takes this opportunity to voice its support for Senate Bill 440, which expands the scope of practice for licensed pharmacists, who meet specified requirements, to include prescribing and dispensing tobacco cessation aids and mandates Medicaid coverage for those services.

Tobacco use is one of the leading causes of preventable illness in the United States. In addition to systemic health concerns, tobacco use has significant oral health consequences. According to the American Dental Association, cigarette smoking can lead to a variety of oral effects, including gingival recession, impaired healing following periodontal therapy, oral cancer, mucosal lesions, periodontal disease and tooth staining. Due to the serious oral health implications, MDHA strongly supports efforts to promote the recognition, prevention and cessation of tobacco use. Expanding and incentivizing cessation efforts is essential to preventing subsequent oral health effects and a fundamental basis for the preventative dental services our members provide.

The 2008 U.S. Public Health Service clinical practice guidelines for treating tobacco use and dependence found that counseling and medication are effective when used by themselves for treating tobacco dependence; however, the combination of counseling plus medication was more effective than either method alone. Expanding the scope of licensed pharmacists to prescribe and dispense tobacco cessation aids will increase convenience and accessibility for these products. MDHA supports any policy that makes these important and effective aids more readily available to patients. Additionally, MDHA supports efforts to ensure full coverage for these products for preventative use, and remove barriers to access based on affordability.

MDHA takes this opportunity to thank Senator Hayes for his leadership on this important issue, and will continue to work with him and members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs and Finance Committees to develop and implement effective dental health policy for patients in Maryland. MDHA urges the Committees' favorable consideration of Senate Bill 440.