



**Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)**

To the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair: Senator Brian Feldman

February 13, 2024

***Senate Bill 0334: Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program - Eligibility***

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

*Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA), is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0334: Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program - Eligibility.*

*Workforce shortages have plagued rural communities nationwide, including in Maryland. Expanding eligibility for the Maryland Dent-Care Program to include part-time dentists and dental hygienists who are practicing under a general or limited license; and authorizing the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, to establish prorated loan repayment assistance for part-time dentists and dental hygienists will assist with the ongoing shortages.*

*14 of the 18 rural jurisdictions in Maryland experience a whole county dental professional shortage. More information can be found here:*

*<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/9?state=MD>*

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,  
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