



CHARLES A. DORING, D.D.S., F.A.G.D.
CLEMENTINA PEREZ-WEST, D.D.S.
ROBERT B. TILKIN, D.D.S., M.S., F.A.G.D.

Testimony Opposing HB 393 / SB 334

Higher Education- Maryland Dent-Care Program Eligibility

Submitted by Charles A. Doring DDS

Dear Legislators,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my reasonings why I have concerns about the unfavorable changes HB 393 /SB 334 would cause to an already woefully underfunded Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP). I am a general dentist in Rockville, MD and a Maryland Healthy Smiles provider. Currently, University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) 2023-24 Basic Tuition is \$24,330/semester for Maryland Residents and \$45,267/semester for non-residents. Over the course of 4 years dental school curriculum (not including undergraduate college tuition and other fees), tuition debt alone could be as high as \$194,640 for instate and \$362,136 non-resident. This is the highest possible tuition debt of all the University of Maryland Baltimore professional programs. Just to compare, School of Medicine Tuition over 4 years is \$158,920 in state and \$278,476 non-resident.

According to the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), in 2022 the average graduating dental student debt was \$293,900 and 83% of dental students graduated with educational debt in 2022. The report goes in to state that "Educational debt factors into dentists' career decisions after graduation. New dentists can be deterred from pursuing their desired career path when burdened with substantial debt". This substantial debt influences young dentist practice location and if that are able to participate in the Maryland Healthy Smiles (Dental Medicaid) program or not due to very low reimbursement fees. The Dent-Care LARP program is a great way of helping young dental professional overcome these obstacles but unfortunately the program has not been funded to the extent required in last years Oral Health Care Task Care Bill (2023 HB 290) signed into law by Governor Moore on May 3, 2023.

I have some real concerns about the changes to existing the existing law that are being proposed in this bill are:

- 1) The Maryland Department of Education has not fully funded the MD Dent-Care program as required by legislation passed last year as part of the Oral Health Task Force legislation. The Maryland Office of Oral Health under the direction of Dr. Debony Hughes has requested funding 8 dentists and 5 hygienists for this year but the Department has only funded for 2 & 1/2 positions. Current law requires participants to be "employed full time". To dilute the pool to "part timers" further means less funds would be available to those who are fully engaged in the program.
- 2) The intent of the program is to have providers select Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) to improve access to dental care to vulnerable individuals. Dentist and Denal Hygienists have set up roots in a HPSA community and plan to stay to provide important care in a shortage area. At least 30% of the dental care treatment performed must be to Maryland Healthy Smiles (Medicaid) patients. Those who

11400 ROCKVILLE PIKE, SUITE 509 · ROCKVILLE, MD 20852
(301) 881-7646 · (301) 881-7688 FAX
WWW.NBDA.DENTIST

work "part time" in a HPSA location could also be working in a non-HPSA location and less likely to stay to provide care in areas that need care the most. I understand the need for some individuals who may have other commitments and need to work part time but the program currently cannot accommodate those who fully commit to the program.

3) The addition of "limited license" means individuals who currently are unable to qualify for a dental license. This means individuals who may not have the same level of training as Maryland licensed dentists and dental hygienists. There are pathways for internationally trained dentists to earn a general license in Maryland and we are working on another bill to make it easier pathway for those who were internationally trained and passed the required exams (2024 SB 799 / HB 786) to obtain a general licence. To assume that the graduation requirements outside of the US and Canada are equivalent to ours is a leap of faith that potentially puts patients at risk.

For these reasons, I feel SB 334 / HB 393 give me concerns that passage will diminish the original goal of the Dent-Care program but do ask for your consideration for full funding of the existing program. For these reasons, I ask that SB 334 & HB 393 be given an unfavorable report.

Charles G. Davy MD