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Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
2 West Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: SB 808 – Health Occupations – Licensed Dentists – Administration of Vaccines

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to introduce Senate Bill 808. This legislation seeks to authorize a licensed dentist to administer certain vaccines to certain patients under certain circumstances. There are currently 5,000 dentists in Maryland. Many dentists see their patients more often than they are seen by their personal physicians. Patients generally visit their dentists once or twice a year. Dentists also already provide more injections than any other healthcare provider. This legislation would establish a well-regulated system in which dentists could be properly trained and equipped with the tools to effectively vaccinate patients.

Under this bill, no dentist would be required to offer vaccinations to patients. A dentist's decision to offer vaccinations at all and to offer particular vaccinations would be a voluntary one. Dentists that choose to offer vaccinations will be required to take a Dental Board-approved course that includes instruction in the guidelines and recommendations of the CDC regarding vaccines. Then, during every other licensing renewal cycle, the dentist will be required to complete a Board-approved continuing education class of at least 2 hours that deals with vaccination issues.

Senate Bill 808 provides that a licensed dentist can administer a flu vaccine to a patient who is at least 9 years old, can administer a vaccine that is listed in the CDC's recommended immunization schedule to a person between 11 and 18 years old who has a prescription from an authorized provider and, operating under a written protocol that is vaccine specific and meets criteria contained in Department of Health regulations, can administer a vaccine to an adult that is either listed in the CDC's recommended immunization schedule or that is recommended in the CDC's health information for international travel.

In each of these cases, before administering a vaccine, the bill requires the dentist to obtain from the patient, or in the case of a child the child's parent or guardian, a signed medical history and a signed consent form that clearly outlines the benefits and risks of the particular vaccine.

Senate Bill 808 also contains elaborate reporting requirements. A dentist administering a vaccine is required to report all vaccines administered to the State's ImmuNet program, is required to try to inform both the patient's authorized prescriber (in the case of a prescribed vaccine) and the patient's primary care provider of the administration of a vaccine.

In addition, the bill requires the dentist to enter relevant information about the vaccine in the patient's chart and to provide the patient with a vaccination card that contains all relevant information about the vaccine, including any post-vaccination instructions, a list of the possible side effects of the vaccine, instructions for addressing possible side effects, the dentist's after-hours personal contact information in the event of an emergency reaction and the name of the urgent care center closest to the site where the vaccination was administered.

Senate Bill 808 is being supported by the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Board of Dentistry, the Maryland Dental Association and the University Of Maryland School Of Dentistry.

Senate Bill 808 will help to improve vaccine distribution and allow for greater access to these vaccines. In passing this legislation Maryland will join other states such as Oregon, Illinois, Minnesota, and Georgia, which have already passed similar bills. COVID-19 has shown how important it is to have proper vaccine distribution, and by allowing our dentists to assist with this process we will provide greater access to healthcare for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, I hope that you will give Senate Bill 808 a favorable report.