

Written Testimony in Support of
SB 100

Madam Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written today in support of SB 100. My name is Charles Doring and I a general dentist in Rockville Maryland. Along with providing dental care in an office setting, I also provide portable dentistry and I am on the medical staff of several nursing homes in Montgomery County. I am also the Legislative Affairs Committee Chair for the Maryland State Dental Association, recently named to the Provider Advisory Committee of the Maryland Health Smiles (Medicaid), and I am also a member of the Deans Faculty at our dental school, the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD).

One of the core values in the ADA's Principles of Ethics is that of beneficence, or "doing good". I, like many of my colleagues participate in community outreach programs such as Mission of Mercy, Maryland Foundation of Dentistry, and Maryland's Medicaid dental program, the Maryland Health Smiles. Despite the many forms of outreach, there are still communities of Marylanders that go without dental care for a wide variety of reasons. SB 100 calls for many parties of interest to study the particular barriers to dental care and make recommendations back to this legislative body. Goal, to give every Marylander the ability of a "dental home". A "home" that speaks that individual's language, flexibility in access, and has the ability to participate in a Medicaid program that offers the preventive care the patient requires to maintain oral health without restrictions. The issues of access to dental care are multi layered, intertwined, and complex. They can not be teased out and studied individually.

To give an example of the complexity of the issues, let's look from the prospective of the dental student and the recent dental school graduate.

According to the ADA Health Policy Institute, US dental school enrollment is surging with over 25,000 predoctoral student enrolled in 2018-19, the highest enrollment ever! In 2000, the US had 54 dental schools, today 67. In order to accommodate diversity in the general population, dental schools are training a wider diversity of students. At UMSOD, 24% of dental students come from an Under Represented Minority with 13% African American. 52% of UMSOD students are female. That's the good news.

According to the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB), 2019 dental students graduated with average debt close to a quarter million dollars. That is the highest debt of all UMB Professional schools and 31% higher than the debt of medical students.

The staggering debt of our young dentists clearly effects their practice choice and location. The tendency is to migrate to where the population of patients are that can best afford and avail themselves to receive dental care. According to April 2020 data from the US Health Resources & Services Administration, 59 million Americans live in dental health professional shortage areas. Collectively, we need to come up with strategies that provide long term incentives to have dental team members work in an equilibrium where everyone has availability to and understands the importance of quality dental care. This task force will look at this and may other methods to achieve our goal.

For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report on SB 100.