



Opposition of The Maryland State Dental Association to SB 727 – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave

The Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA) respectfully opposes SB 727. MSDA fully recognizes the hardships that Marylanders have suffered during the last 12 months, and is aware that despite great promise from the vaccines, the pandemic is not behind us.

Maryland dental offices were shut down for 52 days following the Governor's Emergency Order of March 5, 2020. Once they were permitted to reopen, they faced significant obstacles – staffs reluctant to return to work for various reasons, patients who were hesitant to received even necessary dental services, insufficient availability of PPE, and once available, only at substantial increased costs. Many offices, through COVID relief loans, utility and rent deferrals and other measures, did their best to maintain their staff and remain open. However, the future of many practices is tenuous. The 52-day loss of revenue, reduced patient visits, and increased costs have impacted dental practices' financial viability.

SB 727 will create a significant negative financial impact. As an illustration –a sole proprietor dental practice that employs one associate dentist, 2 dental hygienists, 2 dental assistants and an office manager. Each of those employees works 40 hours per week at the Maryland mean hourly rate for their respective occupation These hourly mean rates are: a dentist \$104/hour; a dental hygienist \$51/hour; a dental assistant \$22/hour; and an office manager \$20/hour. The emergency leave liability for such a practice under SB 727 would be over \$30,000. Such costs will have a disastrous impact on dental practices state wide.

Finally, SB 727 permits an employee to use this leave under a variety of scenarios all arising from a communicable disease. A communicable disease encompasses much more than Covid-19 or another disease that could be the basis for a declaration of a public health emergency. Communicable disease includes the common cold, influenza etc. which would not trigger a public health emergency.

However, once an emergency is declared under SB 727, the emergency leave is available for use due to any communicable disease, including the common cold.

Conclusion: SB 727 will impose significant costs and financial liability on dental practices, which can ill-afford additional negative economic impact. It will permit a potential for abuse for many less significant illnesses.

For these reasons the Maryland State Dental Association respectfully requests that SB 727 be given an unfavorable report.

Submitted by:
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