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March 31, 2021

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: The Office of the Attorney General, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: Senate Bill 836 (State Board of Dental Examiners Disciplinary Process and Actions Task Force): Support

The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports Senate Bill 836, which would create a task force to address concerns about the State Board of Dental Examiners disciplinary process and actions, and to recommend possible improvements in a legislative report due by December 1, 2021. The HEAU assists patients who have been physically and financially injured as the result of substandard dental care, billing irregularities, or otherwise unprofessional conduct. Sometimes that harm could have been avoided if patients had been able to avoid dentists with troubling disciplinary histories.

We believe increasing the transparency of and thus the public's awareness of a dentist's disciplinary history could prevent serious patient harms. We trust the task force will strive to balance the best aspects of the medical review privilege inherent to investigatory and disciplinary processes and patient privacy rights with the need for increased transparency to protect the public. We thank the sponsors for their efforts to enhance patient protections in the delivery of dental care in Maryland.

We ask the committee for a favorable report on Senate Bill 836.

cc: Sponsor