



Board of Dental Examiners

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Secretary

Arpana S. Verma, President – Christy Collins, Executive Director

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February 14, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: HB 290 – Public Health - Dental Services - Access - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners is submitting this Letter of Support for House Bill (HB) 290 - Public Health-Dental Services-Access. The bill requires that children enrolled in public schools and various care homes receive periodic dental screenings from a licensed dentist. Specifically, the bill requires that the parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the Maryland public school system provide evidence to the school that the child received a dental screening from a licensed dentist within 6 months before the child's sixth birthday, ninth birthday, and twelfth birthday. The parent or guardian of a child in a family child care home or large family child care home must provide to the family child care home or large family child care home evidence that the child has received a dental screening from a licensed dentist within 6 months after the child's first birthday, before the child's third birthday, and before the child's sixth birthday. The parent or guardian of a child in a child care center must provide to the child care center evidence that the child has received a dental screening from a licensed dentist within six months after the child's first birthday, before the child's third birthday, and before the child's sixth birthday.

In addition, the bill requires that the Maryland Department of Health, Office of Oral Health recruit dental hygienists as well as dentists to participate in the Maryland Dent-Care Program, and offers higher education loan assistance for dentists and dental hygienists participating in the Program who demonstrate financial need and be employed full time as a dentist or a dental hygienist. The bill also requires that the Maryland Department of Health create and distribute "Plain Language" materials regarding the importance of regular dental appointments, and various dental procedures to dental practices, and encourage dentists and dental hygienists to distribute the materials to their patients. Finally, the bill requires applicants for an initial dental license and a renewal dental license to report whether the applicant provides or intends to provide mobile dental services or portable dental services. The Dental Board must then publish a searchable list of dentists and dental hygienists who provide mobile dental services or portable dental services on its website.

The Dental Board supports HB 290. Requiring that elementary age children receive periodic dental screenings will certainly help prevent tooth decay and prevent other dental related issues while contributing to the overall health of the child. If tooth decay remains undetected and

untreated, it will only worsen and eventually reach the root canal. When cavity-causing bacteria infect the nerve endings, children will likely suffer with daily discomfort along with difficulty speaking and chewing. Pain associated with severe cavities can affect a child's educational and social development. Discomfort from tooth pain is distracting and can cause a child to fall behind in school. Children suffering with severe decay may also develop speech impediments. Very simply, the earlier tooth decay can be detected the easier it is to treat and resolve.

The Board also supports the incentive surrounding the inclusion of dental hygienists in the Maryland Dent-Care Program, and providing loan assistance grants for doing so. The result should be an increase in the overall number of dental providers who treat the State's underserved population.

For these reasons, the Dental Board requests that HB 290 receive a favorable report.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me at 240-498-8159, asverma93@gmail.com, or Dr. Edwin Morris, the Board's Legislative Committee Chair at 410-218-4203. In addition, the Board's Executive Director, Dr. Christy Collins may be reached at 410-402-8518, christy.collins1@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners expressed in this letter of support does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arpana S. Verma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arpana S. Verma, D.D.S.
Board President