



Written Testimony in Support of HB 970

Madam Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written support in favor of HB 1146. My name is Alexandra Fitzgerald and I am a general dentist practicing in Frederick, Maryland. Along with providing care in a private practice setting, I additionally serve as the President-Elect of the Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA).

I was saddened to hear from colleagues regarding the obstacles they have recently faced with access to hospital operating room time. Almost three years ago, as we have faced a pandemic, dental offices were instructed to close and limit practice to only urgent care for over two months from mid-March 2020 and May 2020. Ultimately this closure has led to a major limitation in the ability to treat patients, something many offices are still facing today. As a general dentist, we have found that it is difficult for a patient to regularly schedule preventive care appointments on a typical 6 month schedule. Both patients and providers were frustrated in delays to treatment. It is difficult to hear from dentists saying their patients often have to wait 8 months for a block time in the OR schedule or that there are over 3000 patients awaiting treatment, generally with active infection and pain, which can negatively affect their systemic health. Many dentists will be submitting additional testimony detailing examples of their cases, barriers, and the impact the delay of health care has.

Delegate Pena-Melynk initiated a work group to address this crisis. HB 970 provides a framework for a long-term solution to ensure our dentists can provide treatment in an appropriate setting for their patients and hold hospitals accountable for a commitment to providing adequate operating room time for dental services for our pediatric populations, those with disabilities, and our communities as a whole.

I thank you for the opportunity to consider my testimony and respectfully request a favorable report for HB 970.

Thank you,

Alexandra Fitzgerald, DDS
MSDA President-Elect