

My sincerest apologies that I am unable to be here in person to testify on behalf of such an important bill.

I am a general dentist and focus of the care of adults with disabilities and special needs. This demographic of patients is terribly underserved, primarily because patients with disabilities often require care in the operating room because they are unable to understand or tolerate dental care. Approximately 30% of adult patients with disabilities require treatment under general anesthesia and in an operating room due to their medical conditions.

In the state of Maryland it is close to impossible to get OR time as a dentist, let alone a general dentist, to take care of these patients. I myself treat adult patients with disabilities and have been faculty at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry for 5 and a half years, and have privileges at the University of Maryland Medical Center as well as University of Maryland Rehabilitation and Orthopaedic Hospital, and am still unable to schedule patients due to the unavailability of block time at hospitals for the operating room. In the Special Care and Geriatrics Clinic at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, we are a major referral center for adults with disabilities, and we have a waitlist of more than 100 patients who need care in the operating room and we are currently unable to treat due to lack of availability.

We see patients from all over the state of Maryland. Patients will be referred to us from offices hours away. They will make the up to 5 hour drive to come to the dental school, seeking the care they so desperately need. While we do our best and do everything we can to help the patient in the clinic, for those patients who need to be seen in the operating room, we are unable to help them.

For the 5.5 years I have been faculty I have personally been working with my department and within the school to be able to actually utilize my hospital and OR privileges. I have not been able to treat any patients despite all of my efforts because of the limitations of time and bureaucratic red tape and restrictions.

This is a public health crisis. We are seeing adults with disabilities and special needs presenting for dental emergencies, pain, and infection, that we are unable to treat with the patients being under general anesthesia, which worsens these patients' disability, health outcomes, and ultimately, costs the patient and the state more due to emergency room visits, increase in medications, and other medical consequences of these dental issues.