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Committee: House Health and Government and Operations Committee

Bill Number: HB 786 - Health Occupations – Limited License to Practice Dentistry – Services for Adults

Hearing Date: February 13, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) supports *HB 786 - Health Occupations – Limited License to Practice Dentistry – Services for Adults*. MDAC is a leading oral health policy and advocacy organization who works to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care. This bill updates the work requirements for limited license dentists to recognize that dental practices of federally qualified health centers and local health departments provide services to both children and adults with a large focus on Medicaid participants.

Currently, internationally trained dentists have a lengthy passage to obtaining a license in Maryland. In addition to completing educational requirements at an accredited dental school in the U.S. or Canada, they must take several additional steps including the completion of a two-year work agreement at a federally qualified health center or local health department.

Current law specifically requires that the 2-year work requirement be for pediatric patients. When this law was initially enacted in 2003, Maryland had just established the HealthChoice Program, and as required under federal law, the program included dental coverage for children. It appears that the pediatric focus of the two-year work requirement was connected to the need to meet the needs of children who had gained dental coverage under HealthChoice.

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly expanded Medicaid dental coverage to all adults by enacting House Bill 6 (Delegate Bonnie Cullison and then Delegate Mike McKay)/Senate Bill 150 (Senators Augustine and Guzzone). This legislation has been of tremendous importance to improving health equity for Marylanders. Now, almost 800,000 adults have dental coverage through Medicaid. As a result, our federally qualified health centers and local health departments are now serving more adults than ever. It is important to recognize that limited license dentists also may serve adults as part of their work contract. The bill simply recognizes the limited license dentists, as part of the dental programs at safety net providers, also serve adults.

We ask for a favorable report on this bill. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Michael Paddy at mpaddy@policypartners.net.

Optimal Oral Health for All Marylanders