



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

Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners

Spring Grove Hospital Center - Benjamin Rush Bldg.
55 Wade Ave/Tulip Drive
Catonsville, MD 21228

February 13, 2024

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

Re: HB 499 Health Occupations – Private Dental Offices – Infection Control

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

The Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners supports HB 499 Health Occupations - Private Dental Offices – Infection Control. The bill requires each private dental office to designate a dentist who is responsible for the office’s adherence to infection control practices. Among the more common and most serious complaints that the Board receives about dentists are allegations of dirty or unsanitary dental offices. On receipt of these complaints, the Board often assigns outside experts in the field of infection control to conduct an unannounced inspection of these practices pursuant to Health Occupations Article, § 4-205(a)(6). While in most cases, the dentist against whom the Board received the complaint is the owner and operator of the practice and present during the inspection, situations may arise where the owner dentist is not present and non-owner/operator dentists and dental hygienists must practice under conditions which may be out of their control, especially with respect to infection control. If there is no licensed dentist ultimately responsible for the coordination of infection control, there is no accountability in the office, resulting in untoward effects upon patients. By way of example, and not by way of limitation, if an office has not taken adequate measures for spore testing, dentists and dental hygienists may be using unsterilized instruments. If waterlines and surfaces are not adequately cleaned throughout the office, patient safety is compromised. So too with hand instruments.

Based on the above, the Board believes that to properly protect the public from an unsanitary practice, a specific licensed dentist should have overall responsibility for infection control in the office, especially in offices where non-owner/operator dentists and dental hygienists practice in

multiple operatories and have limited authority to enact policies and practices to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines. The bill would require that an individual be assigned responsibility for coordinating the infection control program. In fact, the Board has been advised by some non-owner dentists that their office lacks proper PPE and that they are not authorized to place orders themselves.

The Board notes that it anticipates charging a fee only for the change of registration for a supervising dentist. The original filing will be without a charge and that information will be captured either on an initial license application, a renewal application, or a document associated with the applications.

For these reasons, the Dental Board requests that HB 499 receive a favorable report.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me at 410-294-9900, rwindsor@umaryland.edu, or Dr. Edwin Morris, the Board's Legislative Committee Chair at 410-218-4203.

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

Sincerely,

Robert R. Windsor

Robert R. Windsor, D.D.S.
Board President