



The Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA) Supports with Amendments SB 456 – Qualification for Maryland Dent-Care Program and Study on Use of Dental On-Line Credentialing

Submitted by Daniel T. Doherty, Jr. on Behalf of the Maryland State Dental Association

The Maryland Dent-Care Program was established and has operated with a 2-fold purpose. First, to provide financial assistance to dentists following dental school who are saddled with tremendous debt from student loans. Second, to link this financial assistance to a 3-year obligation whereby the dentist agrees that at least 30% of the patients treated in a private practice or clinical setting will be Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipients. The requirement of the Program that the recipient commit to 3-years of treating at least 30% Medicaid patients is also to expose more dentists and dental hygienists to patients in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA), to incentivize them, following the completion of their commitment, to stay in the area and continue to provide dental care to that HPSA Dental Medicaid population. Traditionally, the grant recipients have been graduates of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, and graduates of other dental schools who are, or intend to become, Maryland based dental providers. The program requires that the recipients continue to be employed for the 3 years as **full-timed dentists**.

In 2023 the General Assembly passed HB 290 which among other provisions increased the amount of the grants to a dentist to \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years. It also expanded the program to include dental hygienists as eligible for grants of not more than \$10,000 for 2 years. Currently there are, on average, 6 dentists per year in the Program or an average total of 18. Last year there were 24 dental applicants and only 8 grants were able to be awarded due to budget limitation. Also, in the first year of eligibility 10 dental hygienists applied, and 5 grants were awarded. The intent was to provide larger grants in an effort to increase the number of dental providers willing to provide care in an HPSA. However, the funding has not been available to significantly increase the number of grants. Since the average student debt for a recent graduate of dental school is between \$300,000 and \$400,000, it seems unlikely that many dentists would be able to afford to practice only part-time. Based on testimony in the House HGO Committee, this may not be true for dental hygienists.

SB 456 proposes to include part-time licensed dentists and dental hygienists as eligible recipients of Maryland Dent-Care Grants. The MSDA strongly opposes these changes because part-time dentists are far less likely to stay in the HPSA in which they have been practicing for 3 years, thus undermining the goal of these recipients making the HPSA their “home” and continuing to serve the Dental Medicaid population. Including part-time dentists will further dilute the budgetary appropriation for this program, and reduce the probability of dentists committing their practices to this population.

Similar legislation introduced in the 2024 Session (SB 334 and HB 393) would have extended eligibility for the Program to both holders of general dental licenses and limited dental licenses. The sponsor’s testimony in the House on HB 265, the cross file to SB 456, was that as a result of objections to the inclusion of “limited licensees”, HB 265 removed “limited licensees”. In fact, SB 456 and HB 265 do not exclude limited licensees. In the Health Occupations Article, the Dentistry Act § 4-101(h) defines a

“license” as a license issued by the Board to practice dentistry or dental hygiene. §4-101(h)(2) states that “License” includes both a general license to practice dentistry and a limited license to practice dentistry (See requested Amendments included with this testimony). Thus, to include all licensed dentists as eligible to apply for a Dent-Care grant permits the awarding of grants to internationally trained dentists who have limited licenses to practice dentistry because, while they may be in the process of satisfying the prerequisites needed to be issued a general license to practice dentistry, they have not yet satisfied the requirements. There are different pathways for internationally trained dentists to become eligible for a general license, among them is a commitment to practice in clinics that provide care to Medicaid recipients. This is in lieu of additional years of dental school. Until they have met the prerequisites of such a pathway, they should not be eligible for a Maryland Dent-Care grant, just as dental school students who have not completed the four-year curriculum and examination requirements of dental school and do not have a general license are not eligible for a grant.

For these reasons, the MSDA respectfully requests that SB 456 be amended to require that applicants hold general licenses to practice dentistry or dental hygiene, and that the bill also be amended to limited part time eligibility to dental hygienists only.

**Submitted February 10, 2025
Daniel T. Doherty, Jr.**

**Amendments to SB 456 – Dental Services -Qualification for Maryland Dent-Care Program
and Study on Use of Dental Online Credentialing**
*Respectfully submitted by Daniel T. Doherty, Jr. on behalf of the Maryland State Dental
Association*

AMENDMENT No. 1: On page 2 in line 4 strike “Be licensed” and insert “**HOLD A GENERAL LICENSE**”.

RATIONALE: The House Sponsor of cross file HB 265 stated during the hearing that the Senate had objected to the inclusion of “limited licensees” in last year’s bills (HB 393 and SB 334), and that limited licensees have been excluded in HB 265 (and SB 456). In fact, limited licensees are still included under SB 456. The definition of a “license” under the Dentistry Act is in Section 4-101 (h)(1) and (2) and (j)(1) and (2) which read as follows:

“(h) (1) “License” means, unless the context requires otherwise, a license issued by the Board to:

(i) Practice dentistry; or

(ii) Practice dental hygiene.

(2) “License” includes, unless the context requires otherwise:

(i) A general license to practice dentistry;

(ii) A limited license to practice dentistry;

(iii) A teacher’s license to practice dentistry;

(iv) A general license to practice dental hygiene;

(v) A teacher’s license to practice dental hygiene;

(vi) A retired volunteer dentist’s license to practice dentistry;

(vii) A retired volunteer dental hygienist’s license to practice dental hygiene;

(viii) A volunteer dentist’s license to practice dentistry;

(ix) A volunteer dental hygienist’s license to practice dental hygiene;

- (x) A temporary volunteer dentist's license to practice dentistry; and
- (xi) A temporary volunteer dental hygienist's license to practice dental hygiene.

(i) (1) "Licensed dental hygienist" means, unless the context requires otherwise, a dental hygienist who is licensed by the Board to practice dental hygiene.

(2) "Licensed dental hygienist" includes, unless the context requires otherwise, a holder of:

- (i) A general license to practice dental hygiene;
- (ii) A teacher's license to practice dental hygiene;
- (iii) A retired volunteer dental hygienist's license to practice dental hygiene;
- (iv) A volunteer dental hygienist's license to practice dental hygiene; or
- (v) A temporary volunteer dental hygienist's license to practice dental hygiene.

(j) (1) "Licensed dentist" means, unless the context requires otherwise, a dentist who is licensed by the Board to practice dentistry.

(2) "Licensed dentist" includes, unless the context requires otherwise, a holder of:

- (i) A general license to practice dentistry;
- (ii) A limited license to practice dentistry;
- (iii) A teacher's license to practice dentistry;
- (iv) A retired volunteer dentist's license to practice dentistry;
- (v) A volunteer dentist's license to practice dentistry; or
- (vi) A temporary volunteer dentist's license to practice dentistry."

Clearly to have SB 456 exclude limited licensees , it must limit its provisions to holders of a general license to practice dentistry and holders of a general license to practice dental hygiene.

AMENDMENT NO. 2: On page 2 in line 7 strike "**OR PART TIME**" and after "or" insert "**FULL TIME OR PART TIME AS A**".

RATIONALE: The vast majority of the testimony at the hearing in the House on HB 265 supporting the inclusion of "part time" licensees as eligible applicants for the Dent-Care Grant Program was given by, or concerned dental hygienists. Only a small part of the proponent testimony referenced dentists, and none of the witnesses were dentists asking to be allowed to participate on a part time basis. However, there were dental hygienists who testified about working part time, and how they believed they would benefit if the bill were to be passed. This amendment would open the Program to dental hygienists with a general license who are employed part time to participate in the program, but would still require that dentist applicants be employed full time.

Submitted by Daniel T. Doherty, Jr.
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