



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

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 0492 – Maryland Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage - Establishment - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this Letter of Information for Senate Bill 0492 – Maryland Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage - Establishment.

Senate Bill 492 (SB 492) will establish the Maryland Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage to support the State's efforts to improve the oral health of Marylanders by ensuring the stability and sustainability of the State's dental hygiene workforce. SB 492 also requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Secretary to appoint the chair and certain members to the Commission, and for MDH to provide staffing for the Commission. The bill also mandated the Commission to submit an interim report by December 1, 2025, and a final report by December 1, 2026, of its findings and recommendations to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, MDH, and the General Assembly. The deadlines for report submission are challenging as MDH anticipates a minimum of six months will be required to hire program staff, recruit Commission members, and establish the requirements related to the Commission's work prior to completing the interim report. MDH kindly requests a consideration on the reports submission deadlines.

The Office of Healthcare Access and Workforce Development within the Office of Population Health Improvement (OPHI) at MDH aims to improve the accessibility and quality of health care across Maryland by increasing the supply of health care providers across the state, especially in rural areas and areas considered to have health professional shortages and/or medically underserved areas/ populations. Current OPHI staffing levels cannot absorb the requirements of this bill. OPHI will require a new position of 1.0 FTE to satisfy the requirements of this bill including the anticipated coordination and staffing of the Commission's work; and the Department's expertise from the State Office of Rural Health, Primary Care Office (Health Professional Shortage Area designations); OPHI Office of Healthcare Access and Workforce Development; and State Office of Oral Health. The hiring of required staff and the appointment

of Commission members would make it challenging to complete an interim report by December 1, 2025, as these activities take a considerable amount of time.

Additionally, current provider data for dentists and dental hygienists is limited and would be requested from the Board of Dental Examiners. MDH will require the procurement of an external vendor to provide additional data needed to complete the mandated report requirements including data on actively practicing dental hygienists, practice site locations, number of hours providing direct patient services, and the current supply of dental hygienists. This additional data collection would require the procurement of a data specialist consultant.

MDH estimates a total cost of \$205,822 for FY26 and \$317,024 for FY27. This funding is not included in the Governor's FY26 allowance.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Herrera Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary