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The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 21 – Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact - Oppose

I am writing to express my concerns regarding Senate Bill 21 (SB21), known as the “Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact,” which seeks to join Maryland with an interstate compact, enabling dentists and dental hygienists to practice across participating states under specific scope-of-practice rules. While I support efforts to increase workforce mobility in our profession, I have significant reservations about the potential impact on dental hygienists, the quality of care in Maryland, and patient safety.

My first concern pertains to the vague distinction between a "privilege to practice" and a "license." This ambiguity raises questions about how regulatory authority will be maintained in Maryland. Current state regulations are designed to oversee and discipline licensed dental hygienists. However, the unclear language in SB21 could create loopholes, limiting the Maryland Board of Dental Examiners' ability to enforce disciplinary actions against out-of-state practitioners operating under the compact.

Additionally, there is concern about practitioners who graduate from non-CODA-accredited programs and may not be required to pass a hands-on clinical exam. Maryland's licensure requirements ensure that dental hygienists meet rigorous educational, examination, and clinical competency standards. The hands-on clinical examination is a critical component of this process, ensuring that practitioners possess the necessary skills before treating patients. SB21 does not clarify whether out-of-state practitioners will be subject to the same standard, which could compromise patient safety and the overall quality of care.

Lastly, the scope of practice for dental hygienists varies significantly across states. Maryland has carefully outlined the procedures that hygienists are permitted to perform in order to safeguard patient health. SB21 does not address how these discrepancies will be managed, leaving the possibility that out-of-state providers entering Maryland through the compact could practice under less restrictive standards that do not align with our state's established regulations.

In conclusion, while interstate practice is a worthy goal, it is essential that SB21 is evaluated with consideration for its potential impact on the quality of dental care and professional standards in Maryland. I urge the committee to thoroughly assess these concerns and prioritize the well-being of both Maryland's residents and dental professionals.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer C. Gaglione, RDH  
Legislative Chair – Maryland Board of Dental Examiners