



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony for Senate Bill 492

Maryland Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage - Establishment

TO: Hon. Pamela Beidle, Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 11, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 492.**

This bill establishes a Commission to assess the dental hygienist shortage in the State and the impact of the shortage of oral health in rural, suburban, and urban communities and study and make recommendations regarding methods to address it. This includes improving the recruitment and retention of dental hygienists in private practice, community health centers, and public health settings at the statewide level; developing region-specific recruitment and retention strategies for dental hygienists in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the State; expanding dental hygiene education opportunities at institutions of higher education; increasing retention of dental hygiene students through educational support and wraparound services; and supporting dental assistants and community health workers in accessing dental hygiene educational opportunities.

Dental hygienists are an entry level occupation and there is a clear need to expand that part of Maryland's healthcare workforce. Establishing this commission could be an important step in addressing that issue by identifying potential talent pools that can be targeted through rigorous recruiting efforts, scholarships, stipends, or perhaps other forms of assistance. There are many Marylanders, especially in Baltimore City, that are looking for quality careers but are not aware of potential opportunities. This bill is an important step in the right direction by examining the issue properly so that informed solutions can be proposed.

For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 492 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

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