

## **Talking Points for Senator McKay's Testimony on SB 462**

### **– Maryland Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage – Establishment**

- Thank you for the opportunity to bring SB 462 to the Committee today.
- This bill is the next step in my commitment to increasing access to dental care for all Marylanders.
- In 2022, Delegate Bonnie Cullison and I sponsored HB 6. This groundbreaking bill provided for dental coverage for almost 800,000 adults enrolled in Medicaid. On the Senate side, Senate Bill 150, was sponsored by Senator Malcolm Augustine and Senator Guy Guzzone.
- Since the bill was implemented in 2023, about 200,000 adults have obtain dental services using their Medicaid coverage. Some people had not seen a dentist for decades because of their lack of coverage. Now they have access to preventative services, such as cleanings, and restorative services, such as fillings. These services will keep them healthier overall and out of our emergency rooms.
- Now, we need to turn our attention to ensuring we have enough dental providers to serve our communities. Dental hygienists are a critical part of our dental workforce, yet I have heard reports that of the extreme difficulty in filling dental hygienist positions in my district, and I expect that you have heard these same reports in your district as well.
- Our Maryland experience with the dental hygienists reflects the national trend. According to the Health Policy Institute, 92% of dental practices have reported that it had been extremely or very challenging when recruiting dental hygienists.<sup>1</sup>
- SB 462 establishes the Commission to Study the Dental Hygienist Shortage. I did not craft this bill from scratch. I looked at the work undertaken by Chair Beidle with SB 440 in 2022, which established the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland. As a result of the Commission's work, Maryland has made progress, particularly in nursing, with innovative programs. For example, a Commission recommendation led to Senator Lam's SB 718 from last session to create a wrap-around services for nursing students in community colleges under the Pathways to Nursing Program.
- Under SB 462, the Commission includes educators, community colleges, the University of Maryland Baltimore, dental hygienists, dentists, and public health policy-makers. The Commission is charged with developing recommendations in several key areas:

- The recruitment and retention of dental hygienists across different regions of Maryland;
- How we can support our dental hygiene education programs to meet the growing need for dental hygienists;
- How we can support dental assistants and community health workers to enter dental hygienist programs and be successful.

Thank you for this Committee's long history of supporting dental access in Maryland. I ask for a favorable vote on SB 362 and look forward to working with the Committee.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/sept2024\\_hpi\\_economic\\_outlook\\_dentistry\\_main.pdf?rev=a9c8497a7f7144d3837346cac311c488&hash=090A0346A769686474FD634B9355B5D9](https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/sept2024_hpi_economic_outlook_dentistry_main.pdf?rev=a9c8497a7f7144d3837346cac311c488&hash=090A0346A769686474FD634B9355B5D9)