

SB 492, Support with Amendments

Charles Doring DDS

Written Testimony in Support of SB 492 with Amendments

From Charles A. Doring DDS

A Maryland Healthy Smiles (Dental Medicaid) Provider

Submitted 2/7/2025 for hearing 2/11/2025

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide oral and written testimony in support of, with amendments, to SB 492. I am a general dentist in a small group practice in Rockville that employs a team of 15 dental health providers and support staff. I am also the president-elect of the Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA) as well as Dean's Faculty member at our University of Maryland School of Dentistry. I was a member of the 2022 Maryland Legislative Oral Health Care Task Force charged with finding solutions to dental health care disparities. I am speaking to you as an individual and Dental Medicaid provider today.

I personally, along with many other members of the Maryland State Dental Association, have challenges finding qualified Certified Dental Assistants (CDA), registered Dental Radiation Technologists (DRT), and Registered Dental Hygienists (RDH). Without a full compliment of dental team members, dental offices are unable to schedule to capacity to meet the dental needs of the citizens of Maryland in a timely fashion. The shortage was made worse during the COVID-19 pandemic when many dental team members decided not to return to work. This workforce shortage continues today. According to the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute October 2022 document entitled:

"Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today's Labor Market"

The dental sector is facing a serious workforce shortage. Vacant positions in dental assisting and dental hygiene have reduced dental practice capacity by an estimated 10% nationally. One in three dentists who do not have full appointment schedules indicate that trouble filling staffing positions is a contributing factor. Workforce shortages were initially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. We now know that is just part of the story. Enrollment in dental assisting programs has been trending downward since 2015, and the pandemic had a negative impact on dental hygiene program enrollment. While there has been some recovery of enrollment in dental hygiene programs, data suggest that dental assisting program enrollment will not rebound in the near future. As a result, workforce shortages are likely to remain an issue for years to come.

While I appreciate the bill addressing the RDH shortage, the commission should evaluate and come up with recommendations to solve the entire dental team workforce problem so dentistry can provide more timely care by qualified licensed or certified individuals. This should include consideration of Maryland moving forward with education programs for Community Dental Health Care Coordinators (CDHC) and Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDA).

For the reasons stated above, I ask for a favorable report on SB 492 with the proposed amendments attached.

**Amendments to SB 492 – Maryland Commission to Study the Dental
Hygienist Shortage – Establishment**
Respectfully Submitted by Dr. Charles Doring

Amendment No. 1: On page 1, lines 2,3,4,8, 11 and on page 3, line 6 strike “**hygienist**” and substitute “**auxiliary**”.

Requested by
Dr. Charles Doring
February 7, 2025