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Finance Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony in Support of SB0021 - Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the Finance Committee:

This bill was created in partnership with the Council of State Governments, the National Center for Interstate Compacts, and the Department of Defense. After a long and rigorous stakeholder review that included the American Dental Association, the American Dental Hygienists Association, and the American Student Dental Association (among others), this compact was released in January of 2023. Since that time, it has become active in ten states, including Virginia, and is pending in fifteen others, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The alternative compact you will hear about today is not currently effective in any states.

Similar to many of the health care compacts this Committee has previously passed, the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact will enable dentists and dental hygienists to acquire compact privilege and allow them to practice in other active states without having to obtain individual licenses for each state. It will increase license portability for dental professionals, support military families, and improve access to oral health services for many Marylanders.

The compact still requires a background check and once a licensee is deemed eligible to obtain compact privileges, states can take a disciplinary action against a compact privilege holder just as if that person held a license in the state. If any action is taken, it is quickly communicated to all member states and the action will apply to all compact privileges that a practitioner holds. These safeguards maintain the safety of Maryland dental patients and the integrity of the dental practice.

Of particular importance is the support this provides for military families, which are highly mobile and are reassigned to a new duty station every two to three years on average. The DOD supports these compacts as a solution for portability so that military spouses are able to continue to work as they move with their families. A dentist or dental hygienist must apply for a compact privilege in each state where they wish to practice, and States will still retain control over who they license and scope of practice.

Per the Fiscal Note, SB0021 would not require additional state resources.

Thank you for your consideration and I ask you for a favorable report.