

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly Health and Government Operations Committee

Subject: Support for HB 534 - Interstate Dental and Dental Hygiene Licensure Compact

Dear Honorable Members,

My name is Saana Kataria, and I am a dentist trained in India, currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. I also have hands-on experience working as a Dental Assistant and Treatment Coordinator in California, where I provided care for underserved, state-insured patients. As the President of the Johns Hopkins Oral Health Society, I lead a student organization dedicated to advancing oral health advocacy, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve access to equitable dental care. Additionally, I serve on the board of a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in California, where I contribute to quality assurance and risk management efforts aimed at improving access to healthcare for underserved populations. I write to express my strong support for HB 534, the legislation that would enable Maryland to join the Interstate Dental and Dental Hygiene Licensure Compact.

The proposed compact provides a critical framework to address challenges in dental workforce mobility and access to care. By creating an expedited licensure process across member states, the compact will:

- **Enhance Workforce Mobility:** Dentists and dental hygienists will be able to practice across state lines under a streamlined process, reducing administrative burdens and delays.
- **Expand Access to Care:** The compact enables dental professionals to provide services in multiple states, addressing shortages in rural and underserved areas and improving access to oral health care.
- **Protect Public Safety:** Through shared disciplinary records and uniform licensure standards, the compact ensures that public safety remains a priority while enabling mobility for dental professionals.
- **Support Military Families:** Provisions in the compact waive licensure fees for active-duty military members and their spouses, easing transitions for those relocating frequently.

The compact establishes a centralized repository for documentation and verification, reducing redundancy and delays in the licensure process. It also creates a commission to oversee its implementation, ensuring compliance and effective coordination among participating states. Importantly, the compact retains state sovereignty while enabling collaboration to protect the public and enhance the workforce.

In my various roles, I have had firsthand experience addressing access gaps in underserved communities, and I believe the compact is a necessary step forward. It reduces barriers for qualified professionals, supports workforce flexibility, and enhances public health outcomes. I urge the committee to support HB 534 and enable Maryland to join this innovative initiative. By

doing so, Maryland will contribute to a nationwide effort to modernize dental licensure, improve access to care, and support the dental workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Saana Kataria

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