



The Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA) Opposes HB 265 – Qualification for Maryland Dent-Care Program and Study on Use of Dental On-Line Credentialing
Submitted by Daniel T. Doherty, Jr. on Behalf of the Maryland State Dental Association

I. Opposition to Section 1 of HB 265.

The Maryland Dent-Care Program was established and has operated with a 2-fold purpose. First, to provide financial assistance to dentists following dental school who are saddled with tremendous debt from student loans. Second, to link this financial assistance to a 3-year obligation whereby the dentist agrees that at least 30% of the patients treated in a private practice or clinical setting will be Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipients. The intent of the Program is to encourage more dentists and dental hygienists to select Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) to establish their practice, and, following the completion of their commitment, to stay in the area and continue to provide dental care to that HPSA Dental Medicaid population. Traditionally, the grant recipients have been graduates of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, and graduates of other dental schools who are, or intend to become, Maryland based dental providers. The program requires that the recipients continue to be employed for the 3 years as **full-timed dentists**.

In 2023 the General Assembly passed HB 290 which among other provisions increased the amount of the grants to a dentist to \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years. It also expanded the program to include dental hygienists authorizing grants of not more than \$10,000 for 2 years. The intent was to provide larger grants in an effort to increase the number of dental providers who provide care in an HPSA long term. However, the funding has not been available thus far to accomplish this goal, and an increase in the near future is highly unlikely.

HB 265 proposes to add part-time dentists as eligible recipients of Maryland Dent-Care Grants. The MSDA strongly opposes these changes because part-time dentists are far less likely to stay in the HPSA in which they have been practicing for 3 years, undermining the goal of these recipients making the HPSA their “home” and continuing to serve the Dental Medicaid population. Including part-time dentists will further dilute the meager budgetary appropriation for this program, and reduce the probability of dentists committing their practices to this population.

HB 265 would also include limited licensees as eligible recipients of these grants. This permits the awarding of grants to internationally trained dentists whose licenses are restricted because, while they may be in the process of satisfying the prerequisites needed to be issued an unrestricted general license to practice dentistry, they have not satisfied the requirements for a general dental license. There are pathways for internationally trained dentists to become eligible for a general license. Until they have met the prerequisites of such a pathway, they should not be eligible for a Maryland Dent-Care grant, just as dental school students who have not completed the curriculum and examination requirements for a general license are not eligible for a grant.

II. Concerns About Section 2 of HB 265.

Section 2. of HB 265 is a non-codified provision that requires the Maryland Insurance Administration to conduct a study as to whether dental insurance health plans are using an online credentialing system to process uniform credentialing forms, and to report its findings and recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committees by December 1, 2025. The MSDA's concerns are twofold: 1) such a study should require the participation of representatives of Maryland dental associations which represent licensed dentists. 2) Another concern is whether it is more appropriate to request the MIA to conduct this study by a Joint Chairman's letter, rather than by passage of legislation.

For these reasons the Maryland State Dental Association urges that HB 265 receive an unfavorable report.

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