

HB 573 Support

Charles Doring DDS

Written Testimony in Support of HB 573

From Charles A. Doring DDS

A Maryland Healthy Smiles (Dental Medicaid) Provider

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Dear Members of the Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide oral and written testimony in support of HB 573. 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 a 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 to you today.

Dental Assistants play a vital roll in providing dental care to the citizens of Maryland. Besides performing four handed chairside dentistry, dental assistants often perform the vital infection control operations within the dental office. Dental assistants often start as being mentored in the office by a supervising team of Certified Dental Assistants, dentists, and registered dental hygienists. The training often includes hands on training during the day and classwork at night to become a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) and certified Dental Radiation Technologist (DRT). Testing for both these levels is provided by the Dental Assisting National Board examination. (<https://www.danb.org/>) Passage of these exams leads to a higher prestige, responsibility, and pay for the dental assistant.

In 2022, passage into law of HB 968/SB 714 elevated the profession of dental assisting to a new level by establishing the Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA). For unknown reasons, the EFDA regulations have been stalled by the Department of Health which has caused delays in implementing education programs for EFDA training. Passage of HB 573 corrects one flaw in the original bill in that it would allow for on-line EFDA training by two organization well known for providing quality education to general duty EFDA and Orthodontic EFDA.

The Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners has raised concerns about the lack of hands-on training with on-line learning. HB 573 states permissible on-line training "when appropriate". Under HB 573, hands-on testing of skills could still be performed in a classroom setting or on-line with camera one-on one with the clinical instructor. Passage of HB 573 will provide momentum to elevate the profession of dental assistants to where deserve and hopefully attract more individuals into the profession of dental assisting.

According to the American Dental Association Health Policy Instate study on Dental Workforce Shortages:

"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. "

Passage of HB 573 will help the dental profession provide better oral health care to the citizens of Maryland by providing a better well trained certified dental assisting workforce.

For these reasons, I ask HB 573 be given a favorable report.