

My name is Dr. Steven Siegel. I had been a practicing orthodontist in Maryland for over thirty-five years with private practices in Reisterstown, Glen Burnie, and Owings Mills. I have been a faculty member of the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Maryland, Baltimore College of Dental Surgery since 1989 and have been affiliated with the Johns Hopkins Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Team for over thirty years. I was the director of an expanded function orthodontic assistants' course at Howard Community College for many years. From 1980 to 1982 I served in the United States Public Health Service as a commissioned officer, serving at the East Baltimore Medical Plan, 1000 East Eager St. I presently serve as President-Elect of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). The AAO's mission is to advance the art and science of orthodontics through education, advocacy, and research. We have 19,000 members including almost 300 members in Maryland.

More than 50% of orthodontists surveyed in 2022 reported that staff turnover and shortages were a problem or significant problem impacting or expected to impact their practice. According to the US Department of Labor, overall employment in healthcare occupations is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations from 2022 to 2032. About 1.8 million openings on average are projected each year in health care occupations (including dental and orthodontic assistants) over this period due to industry growth and the need to replace workers who permanently depart these occupations. These labor force gaps in orthodontics may have undesirable consequences such as reducing the number of available patient appointments, placing added stress on remaining staff, or utilizing less qualified employees to perform procedures normally performed by expanded function orthodontic assistants.

If only in-person orthodontic assistant training programs are permitted, inadvertent consequences could be a significant reduction in training programs resulting in reduced accessibility for employees seeking to become expanded function orthodontic assistants. This will add cost for training, and result in greater inconvenience and time lost from work. The result will be an exacerbation of staff shortages and may have the opposite effect as intended, a compromise to patient health and safety and reduced access to quality care.

Trapezio is the only expanded function orthodontic assistant training program endorsed by the American Association of Orthodontists. Trapezio's online, self-paced training, coupled with hands-on training has proven over and over to be highly effective in helping to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become an excellent expanded function orthodontic assistant. The training is both cost-effective and accessible. The Trapezio programs have been thoroughly vetted by the American Association of Orthodontists, and over 10,000 students are reported to have graduated from its programs. Trapezio is an AGD PACE CE program provider, having gone through an extensive application and approval process.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report of HB 573.