



Maryland
DENTAL HYGIENISTS'
ASSOCIATION

March 4, 2025

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 240
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

HOUSE BILL 849 – MARYLAND COMMISSION TO STUDY THE DENTAL HYGIENIST
SHORTAGE – ESTABLISHMENT

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Dental Hygienists Association (MDHA) is the professional association for dental hygienists providing services in Maryland. As an organization, MDHA seeks to improve the public's total health by advancing the art and science of dental hygiene, including ensuring access to quality oral health care, increasing awareness of the cost-effective benefits of preventative dental services, promoting the highest standards of dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research, and representing and promoting the interests of dental hygienists in Maryland.

In keeping with those goals, MDHA takes this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 849 to establish a comprehensive Commission to develop recommendations to address the dental hygienist workforce shortage. MDHA welcomes the opportunity for a representative from our membership to serve on the proposed Commission and believes it is an essential step to coordinate with key stakeholders to develop comprehensive plan to address this shortage that affects our profession and our patients.

As proposed, HB849 gives the Commission flexibility to delve into a variety of topics impacting the dental hygiene profession and the delivery of preventative oral health services in the State, including issues that MDHA has advocated for in previous years like expansion of scope of practice, establishment of mid-level providers, direct reimbursement, barriers to education and barriers to serving in public health settings. The Commission will allow the members to delve into the nuance of all these issues and develop comprehensive and practical recommendations to address the shortage, resulting in improved access to effective and affordable oral health care.

MDHA thanks the sponsor and the Committee for the opportunity to submit these comments and participate in any subsequent legislative work on this important and impactful matter. MDHA urges a favorable report on HB849.