

Written Testimony Opposing HB 265

By Charles A. Doring DDS

A Maryland Health Smiles (Dental Medicaid) Provider

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide oral and written testimony in opposition to HB 265. I am a general dentist in a small group practice in Rockville that employes 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 Dean's Faculty member at our University of Maryland School of Dentistry. I am speaking to you today as an individual and Medicaid provider.

The Maryland Dent-Care Tuition Repayment program is designed to help young dentists and dental hygienists to establish long term "roots" in communities that are Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA). According the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) the average student dental school debt was \$293,900 for 2022 dental degree graduates. This debt is much higher than any other professional school including law and medicine. Such debt greatly influences a young dentist's practice location choices and is a deterrent to being a dental Medicaid provider early on in their professional career.

Again, this year, legislation has been introduced to fundamentally change the focus of the Maryland Dent-Care Loan Assistance Repayment Program. The bill would change and expand the eligibility of the program to include part-time and limited license practitioners.

This program is critical in encouraging people to practice in underserved areas of the state. However, the program has been historically underfunded, and especially in a budget year such as this, there simply is not funding to expand the program to part-time people. We also believe that part-time dentists and hygienists are far less likely to stay in the HPSA after their three-year commitment, undermining the goal of the program to help practitioners make an underserved area their long-term home, and continue to serve the Medicaid population.

My oral testimony will focus on how import the need for full-time fully licensed dental practioners are needed in HPSA areas to establish long term "roots" and how passage of HB 265 will potentially misdirect funding from it's intended purpose. The MSDA Foundation has placed a focus on attracting pre-dent students from HPSA to apply to dental school. Our Foundation has awarded scholarships to these well deserving undergrad students to sit for the Dental Admission Test (DAT) which is currently \$540. The goal is to assist these students' applications to dental school with the hope they will return to their hometown "roots." I grew up in Montgomery County, a product of the Montgomery County Public School System and spent my fist 2 years of undergraduate school at Montgomery College. I know how important it is to return home full time and give back to my community.

For the above reasons, and many others, I ask for an unfavorable report on HB 265.