

February 14, 2025

Subject: Support for HB 0045 - Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact

Dear Honorable Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Saana Kataria and I am a dentist trained in India, currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. I also have hands-on experience working as a Dental Assistant and Treatment Coordinator in California, where I provided care for underserved, state-insured patients. As the President of the Johns Hopkins Oral Health Society, I lead a student organization dedicated to advancing oral health advocacy, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve access to equitable dental care. Additionally, I serve on the board of a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in California, where I contribute to quality assurance and risk management efforts aimed at improving access to healthcare for underserved populations.

I write to express my strong support for HB 0045, which establishes the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact. This legislation creates a framework for licensure portability that allows dental professionals to practice in multiple states, addressing critical workforce challenges and improving access to care while maintaining the highest standards of patient safety.

This compact is a necessary step forward in improving workforce mobility and access to care. By enacting this legislation, Maryland will:

- **Enhance Workforce Mobility:** Streamlined licensure processes will allow dental professionals to respond more quickly to workforce demands across state lines.
- **Expand Access to Care:** Workforce shortages, particularly in underserved and rural areas, can be addressed by enabling dental providers to practice where they are most needed.
- **Protect Public Safety:** Through shared disciplinary records and uniform licensure standards, the compact ensures that only qualified professionals can practice.
- **Support Maryland Families:** Reducing licensure barriers benefits military families and Marylanders in need of care by minimizing delays caused by administrative hurdles.

HB 0045 takes a careful approach, requiring similar enactment by seven other states to ensure its effectiveness and establishing oversight by the Maryland Department of Health to uphold professional accountability. These measures ensure public safety while fostering collaboration with other states to improve access to care.

In my various roles, I have had firsthand experience addressing access gaps in underserved communities. By supporting HB 0045, Maryland can reduce these barriers, improve workforce flexibility, and strengthen oral health outcomes statewide.

I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 0045 and advance Maryland's commitment to addressing dental workforce challenges. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide further information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Saana Kataria

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