



Maryland
DENTAL HYGIENISTS'
ASSOCIATION

January 28, 2025

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

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT: HOUSE BILL 265 – DENTAL SERVICES – QUALIFICATION FOR MARYLAND DENT- CARE PROGRAM AND STUDY ON USE OF DENTAL ONLINE CREDENTIALING

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Dental Hygienists Association (MDHA) is an organization seeking 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 that mission, MDHA takes this opportunity to voice its support for House Bill 265 – Dental Services – Qualification for Maryland Dent-Care Program and Study on Use of Dental Online Credentialing, which would adjust the eligibility criteria for higher education loan assistance grants within the Maryland Dent-Care Program to include dental practitioners practicing part-time in eligible settings.

Expanded eligibility of the Dent-Care Program, under the parameters outlined in HB265, would provide another incentive for current and incoming dental hygienists to prioritize vulnerable and underserved patient populations in how they provide essential, preventative oral healthcare services. Due to the nature of their scope of practice and the preventative services they provide, dental hygienists are often more mobile and better able to serve as oral health envoys in underserved populations and geographic areas, and this expansion of the Dent-Care program will support those dental hygienists as they seek to balance the cost of their training with their passion for practice. As a significantly female profession, subject to significant workforce challenges and a profession facing a growing workforce shortage, HB265 provides another essential tool for the State to support and incentivize these essential providers.

MDHA takes this opportunity to thank Delegate Bagnall for her leadership on this issue and the Committee for its consideration of the legislation. We urge the Committee's favorable consideration of House Bill 265.

