



The Honorable Delores Kelley  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 18, 2020

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 511 – TASK FORCE ON ORAL HEALTH IN MARYLAND**

Dear Chair Kelley:

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 general support for Senate Bill 511 and the establishment of a Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland.

SB511 will establish the Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland to examine a variety of issues impacting access to dental services in the State, with a focus on residents affected by poverty, disabilities, and aging. MDHA applauds the effort to closely examine, identify and address potential barriers to dental care in Maryland and looks forward to working with the other representatives on the Task Force to achieve those objectives.

In particular, MDHA is excited to work within the Task Force to evaluate the benefits of mid-level providers and assess dental therapy programs and educational opportunities in other states. MDHA believes mid-level providers are an effective workforce model that can be used in public health settings to better meet the needs of underserved populations in Maryland, as described in SB511. However, the mid-level provider model can also be used in private practice settings to provide preventative and simple restorative dental services to patients. A robust dental therapy program in Maryland can be an effective tool in providing increased access to care in both public health settings and in private practices, where a dental therapist, working as a member of a larger dental team, may free dentists up to focus on more complex patients. While MDHA generally supports the objectives of the Task Force laid out in SB511 and agrees that mid-level providers would be essential to expanding dental services to underserved populations, it is important that the language in the legislation not serve to unintentionally and preemptively limit the scope of practice of a prospective dental health practitioner to solely serving those populations.

MDHA takes this opportunity to thank Senator Kelley for her leadership on this important issue, and will continue to work with her and the members of the Senate Finance Committee to develop and implement effective dental policy in Maryland. MDHA urges the Committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 511.