



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners
Spring Grove Hospital Center
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55 Wade Avenue/Tulip Drive
Catonsville, Maryland 21228

2021 SESSION
POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 952

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: Oppose

TITLE: Health Occupations – Internship and Residency Training Requirements – Waiver for Former Service Members Injured in Combat

BILL ANALYSIS: Senate Bill 952 requires each health occupations Board, including the Dental Board, to waive any internship or residency training requirements for licensure, certification, or registration, for a former service member who is disabled as a result of injury from combat deployment, if the applicant was discharged under circumstances other than dishonorable, and successfully completed the education and examination requirements for licensure.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Dental Board opposes SB 952. The Dental Board treats each application filed by a veteran as a priority. Although the Board assigns an advisor to each veteran who applies for licensure, and expedites their application, the Board believes that the bill will place Maryland citizens in jeopardy. First, the bill does not define the word “disabled” and does not identify who, or what agency determines the existence or degree of disability. For example, the Department of Veterans Affairs assigns disability as a percentage. That percentage may range from 1% to 100%. A disability of 1% is the rating for a very minor impairment while an individual with a 100% disability suffers total disability. Generally, a medical examination is completed in order to evaluate and assess the severity of any disability. Rating schedules are typically organized under a variety of physical body systems and includes mental disorders.

Under the bill any individual, assuming that an examination was conducted by a licensed health care provider, may assign any degree of disability. That raises obvious concerns since a disability rating of 1% would result in the waiver of any internship or residency requirements which may be a prerequisite for licensure.

Most importantly, the bill would result in inadequately trained dental specialists. For example, all dentists who choose to enter a specialty, such as oral and maxillofacial surgery, pedodontics,

public health, endodontics, etc., must complete a specialty program ranging from 2 to 4 years, depending upon the specialty. All specialty programs include residency and internship work. Those programs are fully integrated into the education and examination requirements and cannot be separated from those requirements as the bill attempts to do. For example, residents are regularly examined by their mentors while actually treating patients. Examinations while performing clinical work comprises the bulk of a specialty candidate's examinations. Dentists who enter specialty programs have since graduated from dental school, and although they undergo additional classroom training, the majority of their work entails treating patients in clinics and public health programs as part of their internship and residency requirements. The internship and residency training are essential, and its elimination would place patients in jeopardy.

Equally troubling is the fact that a disability includes mental disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder. If an individual suffers from an emotional disorder that would hamper their ability to treat patients, or potentially place patients at risk of physical harm, the Board would be powerless to deny the license or specialty recognition.

Finally, the bill could be interpreted as eliminating internship training for dental students in an undergraduate program. There are dental schools throughout the country that require students to "intern" in a clinic or public health arena before graduating. Eliminating the hand-on internship requirement would substantially interfere with the undergraduate program.

For these reasons, the Dental Board urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report for SB 952.

I hope that this information is helpful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me at 301-367-2352, jgoldsm217@comcast.net, or Dr. Arpana Verma, the Board's Legislative Committee Chair at 240-498-8159, asverma93@gmail.com. In addition, the Board's Executive Director, Mr. Frank McLaughlin may be reached at 443-878-5253, frank.mclaughlin@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners expressed in this oppose position paper does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.