



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Finance Committee

February 10, 2021

Senate Bill 465 Maryland Medical Assistance Programs - Dental Providers and Dental Students - Reimbursement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, Senator West, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 465 Maryland Medical Assistance Programs - Dental Providers and Dental Students - Reimbursement.

MRHA supports this legislation that reimburses a dental provider for services rendered by a student of dentistry who is engaged in an educational program at a school of dentistry that meets certain requirements.

Rural Marylanders suffer from chronic lack of access to dental services. This legislation would rightfully reimburse dental providers for patient services given by dental students, thereby increasing the number of services that can be offered to rural and underserved communities. It is imperative during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to offer affordable and diverse solutions to accessing oral health care services to rural communities and beyond.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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