

Good morning to The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair The Honorable Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair, And Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Shayya Rosette, and I am currently a practicing registered dental hygienist in the state of Maryland. I want to first thank you for hearing my written testimony at this hearing about House Bill 393: Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program – Eligibility. I am speaking in favor of passing this bill for part-time dentists and dental hygienists to be eligible for the Maryland Dent-Care program. I have been practicing as a registered dental hygienist for almost ten years, and I have seen so much change in our field as dental professionals. I have had the pleasure and opportunity to work as a full-time and part-time dental hygienist and many great dentists. I have loved the benefits of being a full-time dental hygienist; however, the past few years with the COVID pandemic have changed the scope of practice for colleagues of mine in the dental industry. I am speaking from my own experience that I have decided to work more in a part-time capacity since the pandemic because I have seen that benefits have changed for full-time employees, as well as there aren't many full-time opportunities with the benefits for public health workers present. To get access to student loans, forgiveness, and grants, one has to practice full-time, but for some of us, it is simply not feasible even if full-time opportunities are available, they may not be in that public health scope. What I do in the public health sector in the dental field, I have had to step back from full-time work to focus on other things that require my attention along with my professional life, as a lot of colleagues have had to step back and work in a part-time capacity since the pandemic. Public health is not just about taking care of the public, but we are also members of the people, members of the community. As practicing members and caregivers of the community, we should have the opportunity to qualify for these grants, whether we are full-time or part-time dentists and dental hygienists, because we are still doing marvelous work and taking care of our community and taking care of the general public and those undeserving communities that need the service that we provide. I also feel that if this grant would support those who are working in a part-time capacity, there would also be a benefit for the public because people would be more willing to work in these public health sectors, whether it's full-time or part-time. One may find it challenging to apply for and or attain a full-time position in public health as a dental hygienist or dentist. Some are only available maybe one or two days a week, and we don't want to do a disservice to the public by just limiting the help or limiting access to care for these patients. We know in Maryland, as of January 1, 2023, that all adults under Medicaid now have access to dental services; with this law passing and the influx of patients who now will need care, there are not enough offices that accept the insurance. As a result, many dental offices that already serve the underserved population now require more and more practitioners, whether part-time or full-time, to possibly open their doors to accept new patients. It would be very beneficial for a part-time practitioner to gain the same benefits as a full-time because many part-timers are not working full-time at one office but have worked at several practices to add up to full-time hours. Overall, I find public

health practice enjoyable because it also helps the community I am a part of. I grew up in an underserved community and am so blessed and grateful to give back to my community. So, I would love to think that both dentists and dental hygienists would agree that passing this bill would be very beneficial to the professionals as well as the public. There wouldn't be so many limiting factors to the dental professionals applying for PSELF, and everything would, as a result, benefit the public, as well as the professionals and practitioners who are practicing and interacting with these patients daily. Passing this bill could also inspire and motivate more dental professionals to participate in the public health sector, and perhaps more dentists accept patients with Medicaid coverage. I ask that, as lawmakers, please take heed to these words spoken today because I know from experience that there is a strong need for dental care for the public in the state of Maryland. I would love to have nothing more than for the community I serve to have access to the care that the public desperately needs and also for the caring professionals I have worked with to be acknowledged and appreciated for the tender care for our public daily. Thank you for your time.