



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Health and Government Operations

Chair: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

February 12, 2024

House Bill 0393: Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program - Eligibility

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA), is in SUPPORT of House Bill 0393: Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program - Eligibility.

Workforce shortages have plagued rural communities nationwide, including in Maryland. Expanding eligibility for the Maryland Dent-Care Program to include part-time dentists and dental hygienists who are practicing under a general or limited license; and authorizing the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, to establish prorated loan repayment assistance for part-time dentists and dental hygienists will assist with the ongoing shortages.

*14 of the 18 rural jurisdictions in Maryland experience a whole county dental professional shortage. More information can be found here:
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/9?state=MD>*

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
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