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Health and Government Operations  
Committee  
Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long-Term Care  
Public Health and  
Minority Health Disparities



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14, 2024

**HB393 - Higher Education - Maryland Dent-Care Program - Eligibility**

Good afternoon Madame Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations/Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 393.

Maryland is facing a critical shortage of dentists and dental hygienists across the state, especially in low-income, minority, and rural communities.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously, the cost of post-secondary education for dentists and dental hygienists is rising, contributing to the shortage.<sup>2</sup>

HB393 proposes a solution to this by expanding eligibility for Higher Education Loan Assistance Grants provided by the Office of Student Financial Assistance, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, to part-time dentists and dental hygienists. These grants provide post-secondary loan repayment assistance for professionals who are employed or seeking degrees in those fields. Full-time dentists and hygienists are already covered under the original statute; however, those employed part-time are not eligible. By including those who are employed in dentistry but are on a limited license or employed part time, HB393 will expand the pool of available dentists and dental hygienists in Maryland by easing the burden of student loan debt related to the profession.

Additionally, this bill addresses an equity issue common in part-time dental work. By expanding the Loan Repayment Program to part-time dental hygienists, we are affording the women who make up 93.1% of the profession equal opportunity to access loan repayment.<sup>3</sup> This change will allow the vast amount of women performing part-time work in dentistry to practice professionally without as much financial strain from their student loans.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/Documents/JCRs/2022/oralhealthtaskforceJCRfinal12-22.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(15\)00602-9/pdf?\\_gl=1\\*1txg19z\\*\\_ga\\*MjAyNiMyMDgzNS4xNzA1NTkyMTE0\\*\\_ga\\_X8X57NRJ4D\\*MTcwNTU5MjExMjY4xLjEuMTcwNTU5MjYwNS4wLjAuMA](https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(15)00602-9/pdf?_gl=1*1txg19z*_ga*MjAyNiMyMDgzNS4xNzA1NTkyMTE0*_ga_X8X57NRJ4D*MTcwNTU5MjExMjY4xLjEuMTcwNTU5MjYwNS4wLjAuMA)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.zippia.com/dental-hygienist-jobs/demographics/>

HB393 is an important step towards remedying sizable shortages in dentists and dental hygienists in Maryland, while addressing issues in equity of access for women under the Loan Repayment Program. For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB393.