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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

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**HB786 - Health Occupations - Limited License to Practice Dentistry - Services for Adults**

Good afternoon Madame Chair, Madame Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 786.

Oral health is an essential component of public health, and lack of access to dental care can lead to significant health issues across communities. In Maryland, there is a critical shortage of dental professionals, hindering access to dental care in large swaths of our state. Greater than two million Marylanders live in an area with a provider coverage ratio of 5,000:1 or more, indicating a significant shortage.<sup>1</sup>

This shortage is felt even more acutely in low-income and rural areas in which the dental care system is already strained. In these areas, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) provide dental care for those on Medicaid and Medicare for reduced fees. However, FQHCs endure the same stresses in the availability of licensed caregivers, and face additional limitations in their ability to hire dentists when compared with other providers. It is critically important that we shore up the ability of FQHCs to care for vulnerable populations.

Over the past several years, this Committee and the General Assembly have considered and passed legislation to increase the resiliency of the dental care workforce, but many gaps still exist. Under current law, the State Board of Dental Examiners can issue limited licensure for practitioners of pediatric dentistry. HB786 expands the authority of the Board to grant limited licensure to dentists in all fields by removing the statutory limitation that requires licensees to practice pediatric dentistry - this will bolster the Committee's recent efforts to expand access to adult dental care across Maryland. Additionally, the bill adds FQHCs to the list of entities that can request a waiver on behalf of potential employees. In doing so, HB786 will increase the pool of dentists who can practice,

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<https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/dental-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22maryland%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

supporting access across the state, and allow FQHCs to continue their crucial work to care for Marylanders in need.

HB786 will remedy the issue of understaffing in order to provide necessary dental care to the citizens of Maryland, especially where access is a significant barrier to care. I respectfully request a favorable report on HB786.