



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
516 West Loockerman St., Dover, DE 19904
302-739-4553 (voice) 302-739-6126 (fax) <http://www.gacec.delaware.gov>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 31, 2022

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Ann C. Fisher, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **Senate Bill No. 277 Dentistry and Dentist Recruitment**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed Senate Bill No. 277, which will increase recruitment opportunities for dentists in Delaware. This legislation increases opportunities for federally qualified health centers (FQHC) and government-operated dental clinics to serve the indigent and other underserved communities with dental care and improves flexibility with updated provisional licensing processes for FQHC and government-operated dental clinic applicants. It will assist FQHCs and government-operated dental clinics in recruiting dentists to serve those most in need. It adds FQHCs to the Delaware Institute for Dental Education and Research Board and creates the Dental Care Access Task Force to examine and recommend a course of action to address dental care in Delaware. Council **endorses** the proposed legislation since the current dentist shortage directly impacts many vulnerable individuals in Delaware. Also, with the expansion of the Medicaid dental benefit, there will be an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities needing dental care.

Senate Bill (SB) 277 is an important initiative attempting to address the acute problem of recruiting dentists to work in FQHCs and other government-funded dental clinics. Delaware has particularly restrictive licensing requirements for dentists. Delaware also does not provide reciprocity for dentists licensed in other states. Every dentist who wants to practice under a Delaware license has to pass Delaware specific written and practical exams. In addition, there is a yearlong internship requirement. While this is good for business for dentists who have been through the process, it discourages dentists from neighboring states and elsewhere in coming to Delaware. This has led to a very low ratio of dentists per capita and Delaware has a dentist

shortage. Also, it is extremely difficult to find a dentist in Delaware who has specialized training to treat individuals with disabilities, especially those with ID/DD.

FQHCs have had to close down dental clinics in some areas because these rules make it very difficult to recruit and retain dentists willing to work there. SB 277 now provides that dentists working in FQHCs and government clinics treating “underserved populations” can acquire a “community health license” and after working 3600 hours over two-year period can acquire a full license. To obtain a community license, the person has some alternatives to the Delaware practice examination and does not have to participate in the one-year internship. The hope is that these changes will allow the community dental clinics to adequately staff their clinics.

The Dental Care Access Task Force created by the bill, examines the following:

- a. Dental care access, including for underserved populations and communities;
- b. Dental licensure practices and requirements;
- c. Dental provider type and scope of practice;
- d. Dental provider recruitment and retention strategies; and
- e. Dental insurance networks and coverage, including for the uninsured and underinsured.

As mentioned earlier, Council endorses the proposed legislation; however we would encourage the Task Force to take a meaningful look at the supply of dentists for special populations in addition to the areas listed above.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our endorsement. Please feel free to contact me or Pam Weir at the GACEC office should you have any questions.