

Annual Report to the House of Delegates, January 25, 2023, from the

President

Dear Colleagues,

It is my privilege to serve as your President and to provide this report as an update on the work the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) has been doing since the last House of Delegates on behalf of our profession, patients, and most importantly you, our members.

STRATEGIC PLAN and CORE FOCUS

To start the 2022 governance year, the MDS Board of Trustees (BOT) reviewed the existing MDS *purpose statement*: **Empowering dental health professionals throughout their careers** and the MDS *niche statement*: **To be the leading resource for member success**. Both these statements and the strategic plan were developed by your 2021-2022 BOT and reflect the core focus of our organization which is centered around members.

The Board reviewed the **three-year strategic plan with thirteen goals**:

1. Operating Income - \$8 million
2. Market Share – 77%
3. Reserve Balance – no lower than \$4 million
4. Net profit of \$1.5 - \$2 million from sustainable Yankee branded events
5. Increase Non-dues/non-Yankee revenue by \$500,000
6. Actively measuring engagement, participation, and value
7. Create and execute a plan to improve member value
8. Create and execute a plan to improve retention of members less than 3 years in practice
9. Executing a clear advocacy plan
10. Increase collaboration with other health care organizations and dental education programs
11. Leadership development at the district and state level with the governance structure
12. Continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
13. Staff - 37 to 41 right people right seats

These goals may fluctuate with economic and other unforeseen changes, which MDS Executive Director Kevin Monteiro monitors closely. Led by Mr. Monteiro, the MDS management team presented status updates on these goals at the July 2022 BOT retreat and is proud to report the organization is ahead of the targeted timeframe to meet these objectives.

GOVERNANCE REFORM

The new governance reform implemented July 1, 2021, has improved our ability to be both proactive and quickly responsive. This is an iterative process, and the BOT will continue to ensure the implementation of this reform is improving our processes and organizational effectiveness. Our governance year starting July 1, 2022 was the second full year the BOT was entirely comprised of Regional Trustees. The BOT presently consists of the MDS officers, six Regional Trustees, one At-Large Trustee (who is selected from all the districts), and four non-voting Guest Board members. The BOT was required to fill vacancies for two positions on the Board during the 2022-2023 governance term and, in accordance with MDS governance documents, Dr. Sathish Palayam will serve the remaining term of MDS Secretary Dr. James Lee and Dr. Dylan Weber will serve the remaining term of At-Large Trustee Dr. Neha Das.

Our governance reform also amended the size of the supreme governing body of the organization, the MDS House of Delegates, without changing the representative voice of the districts. The reform moved the date of the annual meeting of the House of Delegates to the Wednesday of Yankee Dental Congress week. After careful review, the Board of Trustees chose to support the recommendation of the Constitution and Bylaw Committee and voted to move the MDS House of Delegates meeting to June to be more aligned with our fiscal year of July 1 and eliminating the need for a second virtual meeting to approve the budget. The BOT also memorialized the election process that

was implemented with the governance reform through the Trustee Selection and Nominations Committee and has been used the last three election cycles. The BOT will review this process for further improvement and created an election task force to update the current MDS contested election guidelines. The BOT completed a thorough review of the MDS Board of Trustees Manual in 2022 and will continue to review and update our governance documents through a scheduled cycle via the MDS Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

Several new communication platforms have been implemented to improve communication between the state and district members. These include more frequent email communications including timely updates on a variety of topics from MDS Committees as well as highlights from the ADA Huddle. The MDS hosted several virtual town halls in 2022 to share information and receive feedback about our legislative initiatives and will continue these in 2023. We also continued the customized “Regional Trustee Newsletter” sent monthly with a personal note from your Regional Trustee along with valuable information about what is happening at the state as well as information from Districts within the Region. Since July 2021, the MDS Treasurer and MDS Managing Director of Accounting and Finance have been meeting regularly with the district treasurers to review accounting practices and provide an exclusive platform for open communication. This has proven to be effective and will continue.

The Committee of District Chairs and Chairs-Elect was created as part of the governance reform by the Governance Task Force as a communication platform. As Vice President and Chair of this Committee in 2020-2021, I personally witnessed the value of directly connecting the state leadership to the district leadership. This crucial platform also connects district leaders with each other and sharing perspectives from across the state has resulted in creative solutions to common questions in addition to raising awareness about new concerns stemming from local issues. Moving into 2023, this committee will continue to have dedicated monthly meetings to foster collaborative discussion on timely topics, including concerns and issues affecting the districts, such as the leadership pipeline, practice issues and membership challenges. There is also a regularly published newsletter by the At-Large Trustee called the “DOC”, or District Outreach Communicator, that relays information from the state to the district leadership.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

This year will be remembered for the historic victory achieved by dental patients in the Commonwealth when Massachusetts voters delivered an overwhelming win for ballot Question 2 on November 8, 2022. We are proud of this accomplishment and grateful for the dedication of all MDS members to this initiative. A very special thank you to Dr. Andrew Tonelli for his expertise, commitment, and time. Dr. Tonelli was truly instrumental to the success of the Massachusetts Providers for Better Dental Benefits (“Yes on 2”) campaign.

As your MDS President, I am especially proud of you, our over 5,000 MDS members, and the strong grassroots effort executed to inform Massachusetts voters of the facts. As professionals in the community, your role was crucial as you shared information with your patients. Thank you for your individual donations and for volunteering your offices and homes to distribute campaign items. We value your time and appreciate your participation in the MDS webinars, town halls, and gatherings to hold signs in visible areas. Thank you to the district leaders who hosted member events in your local communities and for the campaign contributions which were made by every one of the fourteen districts.

The MDS is grateful to the ADA for the very generous contribution of \$5.5 million to support the ballot measure and achieve this watershed victory. The campaign is very thankful for the individuals and organizations in 49 states who generously contributed their finances and time. Thank you to the ADA leadership including ADA President Dr. George Shepley, ADA Past President Dr. Cesar Sabates, and our ADA First District Trustee Dr. Richard Rosato.

As of my last report to the House of Delegates in January 2022, the MDS filed legislation “An Act Relative to Medical Loss Ratio Reporting for Dental Benefits Corporations” was still pending before the Joint Committee on Financial Services. Question 2 was put on the ballot by a group of dentists and patients who came together as the Committee on Dental Insurance Quality, chaired by Dr. Mouhab Rizkallah, who worked to get this measure in front of the voters. The MDS BOT voted to support this initiative on May 10, 2022 and joined with the ADA to work collaboratively on strategic initiatives through the “Yes on 2” campaign. Thank you to the MDS team, including Brian Monteiro, Ellen Factor, and Mike Schiano from Denterlein, who worked diligently with the ADA team led by Michael Graham and Chad Olson to execute the “Yes on 2” campaign strategy.

Question 2 requires transparency, accountability, and solidifies the following important consumer protections for dental insurance in Massachusetts:

- Establishes a medical loss ratio (MLR) for dental insurance companies, requiring them to spend at least 83% of patient premiums on their direct care. A medical loss ratio already exists for medical insurance nationally (80-85%) as mandated by the Affordable Care Act in 2010, and in Massachusetts the medical MLR is set at 85-88%.
- Requires dental insurance companies to report annually to the Massachusetts Division of Insurance, disclosing administrative costs and other financial information to prove how premium dollars are being spent including the specific amount spent on direct patient care.
- The Commissioner of the Massachusetts Division of Insurance must approve proposed rates for dental insurance plans.
- Requires dental insurance companies to refund the difference back to the covered individuals or groups if the 83% MLR is not met.

As promised, we are here now for those who supported us and will assist the ADA to spread positive change across the country. In 2023, the MDS will continue to work with Massachusetts civic leaders and legislators to implement the consumer protections afforded by Question 2. The MDS Government Affairs Committee will be launching a special grassroots campaign this spring to carry out the current legislative agenda set by the BOT.

STRENGTHENING THE DISTRICTS and CULTIVATING MEMBERSHIP

The fourteen individual districts are the grassroots of our organization and provide exceptional member value. In addition to representing the voice of members at the MDS House of Delegates, the districts provide a personal connection to every single MDS member and district events are often the first point of contact for new members. When the districts are strong, the MDS is best able to represent all members. Continuing to evaluate ways to support the districts with the customized resources they need to provide member value is necessary. Creating a strong and deep leadership pool is essential to maintain the vitality of each district. To achieve these goals, the BOT established a dedicated workgroup comprised of Regional Trustees to work closely with district leadership in 2023.

MEMBER RESOURCES

MDS COMMITTEES: The BOT meeting schedule was adapted to include quarterly meetings via Zoom with every MDS committee chair to receive oral reports for updates on committee charges. This format allows committee chairs to present directly to the BOT and to hear about the work being done by the other MDS committees. Charges for the committees this year include continuing traditional programs (like the popular fall apple picking event by membership), addressing timely concerns expressed by members, forecasting ways to mitigate future issues for members, and monitoring trends to proactively prepare our members. The MDS is actively reviewing how we can provide exclusive discounts on products and services to all members. The BOT, at the recommendation of the Dental Practice and Benefits Committee, approved a proposal from Denterlein, the firm the MDS uses for public relations, to execute a multi-faceted campaign to improve the dental assistant shortage. Our dedicated chairs and committee members work hard to create new events and initiatives to provide member value, and we greatly appreciate their time and talents. Every MDS Committee also has a dental student liaison from each of the three Boston dental schools, and we appreciate their enthusiasm and engagement.

MENTORSHIP and PERSONAL CONNECTION: Several committees including membership and health and wellness have been charged with projects focused on providing members with opportunities for mentorship, networking, and a personal connection with other members. Creating a personal connection is critical to cultivating and maintaining our membership base and is a unique offering of organized dentistry. Many dentists have relayed that one of the greatest benefits they receive from organized dentistry is mentorship, and that spans the length of careers. Belonging to an organization comprised of like-minded professionals who are all working towards a common goal is priceless. Mentors can be instrumental to career and personal growth. Faculty members are committed to the profession and are guiding and supporting the next generation of dentists every day. Engaging this group of professionals who are already mentoring new dentists will cultivate MDS membership. Having a network of dedicated professionals to connect with is a unique offering of organized dentistry. The MDS is working on programs that will continue to foster these relationships and strengthen the districts. The MDS Career Center is a popular resource that connects dentists seeking employment with practices for either employment or purchase. The

MDS hosted a program to bring dental students to the Berkshires to meet local dentists and is considering ways to assist members in other parts of the state.

YANKEE DENTAL CONGRESS: For more than 48 years the Yankee Dental Congress has been an annual winter tradition in Boston, and an event New England dental professionals look forward to attending every year. Yankee Dental Congress 2022 marked a return of our in person annual winter tradition with a surprise blizzard. Despite having to cancel Saturday's events, Yankee 2022 was a success with almost 17, 200 total registrants and 531 booths with 322 companies represented on the exhibit floor. Thank you to Yankee General Chair Dr. Todd Belfbecker and the MDS team led by Shannon McCarthy for their hard work. Chaired by Dr. Belfbecker for the second year, the MDS and Yankee Dental Oversight Committee are thrilled to welcome everyone back to the Boston Conference and Exhibition Center in the Seaport to Yankee 2023 where we will "Imagine the Possibilities".

FORECASTING and TRENDS: The dental landscape is changing; demographics of practicing dental professionals are changing and new dentists are choosing different practice models. Telemedicine/telehealth became prevalent during the pandemic and is continuing to trend as patients enjoy having an option of remote consultations. Major business trends forecasted for the next five years include "Agile", blockchain, cybersecurity, monopolies and tech giants, strategic analysis, and artificial intelligence. In dentistry, artificial and augmented intelligence (AI), digital dentistry, and virtual reality are already revolutionizing the way we practice. The workforce is changing and the MDS is actively finding ways these technologies will improve office workflow and consistency in treatment outcomes, and dentists must learn to leverage them to improve their practices. Digital dentistry is part of the dental school curriculum, and new dentists are looking to join or purchase practices utilizing technology. Digital literacy will be important to maintain practice value. AI currently has the capability to quantify caries, monitor lesions, and detect changes in bone levels. AI systems are also working to increase the reimbursement speed of claims. I am proud to be a contributor to the ADA Standards Committee on Dental Informatics Working Group 13.8, chaired by ADA Past President and MDS Past President Dr. Robert Faiella. Working Group 13.8 recently published a whitepaper on AI and digital imaging and is in the process of developing additional AI standards and technical reports. A special online resource for all dentists is [JADA+](https://www.jada.org/), which has a dedicated section on AI in dentistry and is continuously updated with links to current articles, podcasts, and webinars.

The tripartite of organized dentistry is at the forefront of trends that will impact our profession and creating standards to forge the path of our future. The MDS strives to be the ultimate resource at the state level, and that means something different to each member the MDS represents, encompassing varying demographics of age, practice, and locations across the Commonwealth. Please visit (massdental.org) regularly and stay active in your local district to receive all the latest information about trends, special CE, and local and state events.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your membership. I am proud to belong to such a special network of dental professionals, who abide by our Code of Ethics, and unite through organized dentistry to improve the profession today for our patients, and for future generations of dental professionals. It is a privilege to serve as your President, and as we enter 2023, the MDS Board of Trustees will continue to work to innovate, communicate, and find the best ways to provide you, our members, with the assistance and resources you need to be successful throughout your career.

Meredith A. Bailey, DMD
MDS President July 2021-June 2023