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TESTIMONY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DENTAL SOCIETY BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

April 13, 2020

S. 2630 - AN ACT TO PROVIDE LIABILITY PROTECTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND FACILITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) represents approximately 80% of dentists in the Commonwealth through initiatives in education, advocacy, and promotion of the highest professional standards. As the leading authority on oral health care in the Commonwealth, we take great pride in championing oral health and lending the voice of dentistry to worthy initiatives that can make a difference in the lives of Massachusetts residents.

The Massachusetts Dental Society urges the Joint Committee on Financial Services to amend *S.2630 - An act to provide liability protections for health care workers and facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic* to include dental providers and practices in the list of providers and facilities receiving liability protections.

On Sunday, March 15, the MDS became the first state dental society in the United States to strongly recommend that dental practices close to routine, non-urgent care. This decision was made to slow the rapid spread of COVID-19 and to preserve the limited supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline providers in the medical community. Since then, Massachusetts dental offices have stepped up to donate more than 175,000 pieces of PPE in order to support their medical colleagues.

Since mid-March, dental offices have continued to see patients on an emergency basis while pushing off otherwise standard procedures. The longer non-urgent care is delayed, the higher the likelihood a non-urgent issue risks becoming an urgent health concern. With potentially increased numbers of dental emergencies and the continued diversion of PPE to medical providers, dentists need to utilize nontraditional courses of treatment in order to continue serving their patients during this unprecedented pandemic. This unfortunately may open dentists and dental practices to liability claims.

The Massachusetts Dental Society requests that Joint Committee on Financial Services protect dentists and dental practices from liability claims by adding dentists and dental practices to *An act to provide liability protections for health care workers and facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic*.