



February 17, 2021

Chair Liebling and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Dental Association and our 3,000 members I am writing in support of House File 620 to establish a greater Minnesota general practice dental residency program; appropriate funding for the health professional education loan forgiveness program; and appropriate funding to expand the rural dentistry scholars' program.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health and a report published by the Rural Health Advisory Committee, only 10% of dentists work in rural and small towns in Minnesota and an additional 10% live and work in large rural or micropolitan areas (*Strengthening the Oral Health System in Rural Minnesota*, 2018). We have heard from our members who work in greater Minnesota who have watched as the number of dentists in their region has declined over the years. These dentists have shared concerns about recruiting new dentists to rural Minnesota and finding young dentists to purchase the practices of retiring dentists.

One of the primary barriers is the growing amount of student loan debt that dental students are graduating with. As of 2019 the average debt for graduating dental students is \$292,169. This debt is driving their career decisions. This legislation will help young dentists who are interested in practicing in rural Minnesota and could help address access to care in dental shortage areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carmelo Cinqueonce".

Carmelo Cinqueonce, MBA
Executive Director
Minnesota Dental Association