



I have been a licensed dentist in Maryland for 43 years. I own my practice but hired a Dental Support Organization, or DSO, to provide administrative services such as billing, bookkeeping, supply procurement, and office leasing.

I have made my own personal commitment to better the quality of dentistry in general and in Maryland specifically. I went to dental school to take care of patients. But when I started my practice as a solo practitioner back in 1974, I did everything. I was the dentist, the bookkeeper, the accountant, the pension manager, the HR specialist, the marketing expert, the banker, IT specialist, and risk manager. I was spending way too many hours dealing with all of the non-clinical items in addition to trying to keep up with advances in dentistry and keep my dental practice growing. Unfortunately, Dental schools do not prepare their students to handle the business side of dental practice. I was still deeply involved with the business side of the dental practice in addition to being the best leader and dentist that I could be. The result was that I had less time to focus on my patients and take care of them.

In 2013, after 40 years of doing everything myself, I decided to hire Heartland Dental to support the non-clinical aspects of my practice so that I could see patients full time. With Heartland's support, I am now able to continue to offer the same high quality dentistry that I am accustomed to giving my patients, without any of the non-clinical administrative distractions that I dealt with previously.

I am concerned about a bill being advocated by the Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA) SB 228 that would impose severe restrictions on my ability to contract for the administrative services mentioned. This bill not only threatens my practice but, more importantly, the patients I serve. Perhaps most disconcerting is the manner in which the MSDA is portraying their bill and the role of DSOs in the state. They claim that DSOs want to own dental practices. This is wholly untrue. I own my practice. SB 228 is not the solution, it is the problem because it limits choice for dentists and, ultimately, patients.

The alternative legislation suggested by the DSOs (SB 1082) makes no change to current law requiring that only a licensed dentist can own a dental practice. It simply updates antiquated statutory provisions that were written in the 1930s that do not recognize the advances made in dentistry. Such advances in the delivery of medical, pharmaceutical and vision care have existed for decades. The MSDA wants to go back in time by preventing me from obtaining similar services to support my practice.

SB 228 constitutes another anti-competitive intrusion in the dental industry and is similar in intent to the actions of the North Carolina Dental Board which were rejected by the United States Supreme Court last year and opposed by the Federal Trade Commission. Put simply, it

empowers the dental board to put some dentists at a distinct disadvantage, having nothing to do with patient safety.

DSO-supported dental practices often operate in underserved areas, providing patients with access to the dental care they would not otherwise have. Patients in Maryland need and deserve access to affordable and quality dental care. With Heartland's administrative support, I have expanded access to care for the patients in my area. I now am able to see more patients and do more dentistry than in the past. I am excited about dentistry again and no longer have the worries of maintaining the business side of the office.

SB 228 will restrict my ability to contract for administrative services, impacting the cost and efficiency of my practice, forcing me to spend more time doing bookkeeping rather than treating my patients. Consumers in Maryland deserve better than SB 228.

Michael Mann, D.D.S.