

To: Senate Health Care Committee
From: Oregon Dental Association
Re: Senate Bill 660



March 16, 2015

Good Afternoon Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee. For the record my name is Weston Heringer Jr. and I am a retired pediatric dentist from here in the Salem area. I was also the first staff dentist of the Dental Foundation of Oregon Tooth Taxi, the mobile dental clinic that travels around the state providing free care to children in need still to this day. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 660 on behalf of the Oregon Dental Association.

Tooth decay remains a significant public health concern and causes needless pain and suffering for many Oregon children, despite being preventable. Efforts need to be focused on preventing cavities and treating them promptly when they occur, especially given the potential consequences for school-age children.

Dental sealants act as a barrier to prevent cavities. They are a plastic material usually applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth (premolars and molars) where decay occurs most often. Though brushing and flossing help remove food particles and plaque from smooth surfaces of teeth, toothbrush bristles cannot reach all the way into the depressions and grooves to extract food and plaque. Sealants protect these vulnerable areas by "sealing out" plaque and food.

The likelihood of developing pit and fissure decay begins early in life, so children are great candidates for sealants, which when applied appropriately when no existing decay is on a tooth, may protect the tooth it is applied to for several years.

Thank you for your time, I am happy to answer any questions.