

To: Senate Health Care Committee
From: Oregon Dental Association
Re: Senate Bill 672



March 16, 2015

Good Afternoon Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee. For the record my name is Vanessa Browne and I am an orthodontist from the Portland area. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Dental Association in support of Senate Bill 672.

For the last 5 years, Oregon has been in the midst of an unprecedented transformation in our health care delivery system. Oral health has been recognized as a key component to overall health and a fundamental part of the triple aim. Yet until February of 2015, dental care was being integrated into a greater health structure without the benefit of a dedicated presence and voice to influence policy.

Oral health can be significantly improved through early intervention that includes both education and prevention. For years, Oregon has missed opportunities to promote oral health through statewide dental public health programs due to lack of leadership and dedicated and comprehensive funding in the public health department. Although we are very pleased that OHA prioritized the hiring of a Dental Director in February 2015 and we now have one, it is more important than ever to add the position to statute to make sure we never go without one again. We need to ensure there is continued funding for not only this position but for a comprehensive oral health unit.

We envision that adding a dental director to statute will help our state elevate the importance of oral health by:

- Formulating and promoting the establishment of dental health policy for the state.
- Promoting the development and implementation of programs and policies for the prevention of oral diseases among other chronic disease programs.

- Forging internal and external partnerships to ensure that oral health is addressed when policies are being considered and programs are being planned.
- Providing consistent information on oral health to health officials and policy makers.
- Leading the development and expansion of oral public health campaigns and care delivery systems.
- Assisting in developing and implementing initiatives for prevention and control of oral diseases.

There are a myriad of benefits simply having a dental director can provide to our state. For starters, a dental director can help Oregon qualify for federal grants to the state -- grants that the state hasn't been eligible to even apply for in the past without a position in place. Many of these grants are designed to help increase dental care access for underserved populations.

Oregon went far too long without a dental director and we ask for your support of Senate Bill 672 to prevent it from ever happening again. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.