

To: House Health Care Committee
From: Oregon Dental Association
Re: House Bill 2972



March 20, 2015

Good Afternoon Chair Greenlick and members of the committee. For the record my name is Will Trevor and I am a general dentist here in the Salem area. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Dental Association in support of House Bill 2972.

Tooth decay remains a significant public health concern and causes needless pain and suffering for many Oregon children, despite being wholly preventable. Efforts need to be focused on preventing cavities and treating them promptly when they occur, especially given the potential consequences of oral disease on school-age children. These consequences are numerous and include problems with eating and speaking, an inability to focus on learning, and lower self-esteem.

Currently, the Oregon Smile Survey is the only oral health surveillance system we have in the state, and it is only conducted every five years. Although it is a statistically accurate survey, it is limited to 82 schools state wide. According to the survey, on any given day, as many as 3,800 children in Oregon are suffering from dental pain or infection. Without specific data, we currently have no way to know who is suffering and we are unable to identify areas with the greatest need. A school screening program is a first step in helping us identify specific needs, so we are better able to target programs and services to children in those areas.

An oral health screening is a basic physical review of a child's mouth, including the lips, tongue, teeth, gums and other oral tissues. A pair of gloves, a tongue depressor, and a good light source are all that are needed to complete such a screening. The objective of these screenings is simply to identify normal versus abnormal oral conditions and each can be completed in under 5 minutes. In creating this bill, ODA worked with school districts to

create a program designed on the school vision screening program currently in place to facilitate integration into the existing system.

A statewide oral screening requirement generates an important reminder for all Oregon families that oral health is important. Screenings provide vital data and early detection to help create inroads for establishing dental homes. However, ODA is sensitive to the fact that this requirement may be too burdensome for some families. As such, ODA is open to amendments that would create an additional option for parents to opt out if needed, by identifying a specific reason, such as geographic concerns, work schedule, or financial burden. Gathering data on why a family is unable to complete a screening can be equally valuable in assisting us to look at ways of delivering care in years to come.

House bill 2972 is an important step in analyzing the oral health needs of Oregon's children and we ask for your support. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.