



February 4, 2020
Senate Health Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: SB 1549 – Dental Therapy Licensure

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Committee,

The Oregon Rural Health Association wishes to voice its full support for SB 1549 which will help increase access to dental care for Oregonians—specifically those who experience the most barriers to access.

As Oregon looks at its dental workforce needs, mid-level providers like dental therapists will play a critical role. In areas that cannot financially support a dentist, dental therapists are able to provide safe and high-quality preventative services because their salary requirements are far below that of a dentist.

What's more, we know that providers who are from rural areas, and those who train in rural areas are much more likely to practice in rural areas. Because the scope of practice for a dental therapist is much smaller than that of a dentist, their education requirements and the financial investment required present a lower barrier to entry. This means that communities can identify and train up providers who already live in the area, rather than relying on recruiting highly educated, and highly paid providers.

Oregon is in a state of crisis when it comes to dental access. Dental therapy is a commonsense step toward alleviating those problems.

Please join us in supporting SB 1549.