

Advantage Dental

From DentaQuest

Advantage Dental Group, PC

January 31, 2020

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Advantage Dental is a large Dental Care Organization (DCO) serving over 330,000 Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members. We operate over 60 dental offices throughout the state including many in rural and frontier counties. In some counties, Advantage Dental is the only access point for OHP members in need of dental care.

Recruiting and retention of dentists to staff some of our remote offices has been a continuous challenge even with the offer of retention bonuses and loan repayment programs. Limited and uncertain availability of dentists adversely affects access and continuity of care for individuals and communities at greatest need.

Our experience with trying to meet the growing need for dental services in Oregon is not unique. Too many Oregonians can't get the dental care they need to stay healthy. Senate Bill 1549 creates the licensed profession of dental therapy and can turn the tide on oral health disparities in our state. As primary dental care providers who provide preventive and routine care under the supervision of a dentist, dental therapists can expand access to care where it is most out of reach: in rural, low-income communities and communities of color. The high-quality care provided by dental therapists can help solve this shortage, increase access to culturally responsive, community-based care, and create good-paying jobs.

This healthcare delivery model has been used in many countries worldwide for over a century, and was introduced in the United States by Alaska Natives 15 years ago. Alaska has since seen both increased access and improved oral health in communities served by dental therapists. Since then, 11 other states have authorized dental therapy in some or all settings, including our own where dental therapists in a pilot project have been successfully delivering care to tribal communities.

We urge you to support SB 1549.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Gary W. Allen, DMD, MS

President

Advantage Dental Group, PC

To Improve the Oral Health of All

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