

I am writing this letter in support of Support of House Bill 2528 that would allow a licensed dental therapist in Oregon. I support this bill because it would provide greater access to care for many people to include the underserved in rural areas. Many dental hygienists have a Bachelors of Science in Dental Hygiene which is four years of study of diseases related to the mouth, tooth morphology, dental debridements and restorative care. A dental therapist would be dental hygiene's equivalent to a mid-level provider such as a nurse practitioner. Mid-level providers can create more access care in private practice, public health, rural areas, reservations, and the prison system.

In 2009, Minnesota approved the first dental therapists. In 2014, a required legislature report reviewed the dental therapists care and access to care. The report was positive with increases in access to care for everyone and more importantly an increase in care for the underserved that are low income and or in rural areas. The state also saw a potential for decreased Emergency Room visits for dental care. Furthermore, a 2018 Minnesota legislature report from the Minnesota Board of Dentistry was also very positive showing increases in access to care with 93% of dental therapists being employed.

In summary, I believe that a dental hygiene therapist would be the logical next step for dental hygienists.