

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2528

March 4, 2021

Chair Prusak and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

For the record, my name is Sandra Miles, and I reside in Portland, OR. I am a dental hygienist and I work in Portland Community College's dental hygiene program.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2528 that would amend the Dental Practice Act to create a licensed dental therapist for Oregon. I support SB 2528 for the following reasons:

Access to Care

- Dental therapists will work with dentists the way that a physician assistant works with a dentist
- Dental therapists will provide basic restorative dental services which will free up their dentist to provide more complex restorative dental services
- Dental therapists can help dentists provide more dental care to more people at a lower cost

Education

- This bill will require dental therapists to have completed a dental pilot project, a CODA accredited dental therapy education program, or a dental therapy education program that is substantially equivalent to a CODA accredited program and that has been approved by the Oregon Board of Dentistry.
- CODA accreditation standards require that dental therapy education programs include at least three academic years of full-time instruction or its equivalent at the college-level which is one year longer than the CODA accreditation standard for dental hygiene education programs.

Quality of Care

- This bill allows the Oregon Board of Dentistry to require written, lab or clinical exams to test the professional knowledge & skills of applicants for a dental therapy license.
- This bill requires dental therapists to work under the supervision of a dentist per a very detailed practice agreement
- Dental therapists will only be allowed to do what their supervising dentist allows them to do
- Dentists will only delegate procedures to a dental therapist if they believe it is safe & appropriate for the patient.

Evidence

- Patient data from the past 10 years shows that dental clinics in Minnesota that employ dental therapists see more patients, provide more services, and increase gross revenues according to a study from the Pew Charitable Trusts
- Dental Pilot Project #100 has shown that dental therapists in Oregon can provide safe & appropriate dental care under the supervision of a dentist.

In closing, I urge you to support House Bill 2528 because it will allow dentists to work with dental therapists to expand access to dental care in Oregon.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sandra S. Miles, RDH, MSDH