

**March 4, 2021**

**HOUSE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE**

**RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2528**

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Dr. Manu Chaudhry. I am the President and Dental Director for Capitol Dental Care (CDC). We are a dental care organization that provides care to Oregon Health Plan (OHP) beneficiaries, through contracts with coordinated care organizations across the state. I also provide dental services to OHP Medicaid members.

Lack of access to routine, preventive dental care has long been and continues to be an issue for many Oregonians, especially in rural communities, communities of color, and low-income communities across our state. Increasing access to basic dental care not only reduces preventable dental disease but also supports overall health. Dental therapy can provide dental care services to address these unmet oral health care needs in rural and underserved communities and provides huge cost savings to the overall health system.

Capitol Dental Care asks for your support for HB 2528 to allow the Oregon Board of Dentistry to license dental therapists. Dental therapists are primary oral health care professionals with the training to provide the basic dental care that many Oregonians can't get today — exams, fillings, and simple extractions. There is clear evidence that dental therapists have been safely and successfully practicing in the U.S. for more than 15 years, and delivering high-quality care.

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Increasing the availability of dental services by increasing and expanding the dental workforce has been a long-standing concern for Capitol Dental Care. Oregon has a critical shortage of dental care providers, resulting in lack of access to basic dental services. Together, we need to take steps to address these shortages and lack of access. We believe that adding dental therapists to the State's dental workforce is one way to address the provider shortage and lack of access.

Please support HB 2528 and expand dental care access in Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.