

To whom this may concern,

My name is Kari Douglass and I am a Dental Health Aide Therapist working under pilot project #100 in Portland, Oregon. I work for The Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest in Portland.

In 2017, I moved to Alaska for two years to complete the Alaska Dental Therapy Educational Program. I chose to leave my home and do this program because I knew it would bring opportunity to my community; opportunity for affordable access to dental care which is missing from our community, and opportunity for my community members and our youth, to show them that they too, can give back to their community.

I have worked in this midlevel provider position for two years. I have loved every single day of my job because I get to help those that might have otherwise waited until it was too late to save a tooth. I have helped families learn to care for their children's teeth. I have been able to show compassion and empathy with my patients because I have the time to do so; time to build that relationship that is going to lead to changed behavior; --the true path to preventing decay.

I look forward to this pilot phase transitioning to state licensure because I will be able to spend more time with patients, and help improve my community's oral health. This will also mean I can spend less time with administrative tasks.

I know first-hand that dental therapists deliver high-quality care. In August 2020, the dental therapy education program where I was trained was accredited by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), the governing body that accredits all U.S. education programs for dentists and dental hygienists. The newly accredited Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program offers a curriculum that supports our goals of creating innovative, high-quality, community-based health care right here in our own state.

I am writing you today on behalf of myself, Kari Ann Douglass, a Dental Health Aide Therapist working for The Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA) in Portland, Oregon and I urge your support of HB 2528 A, licensing dental therapists in Oregon.

Tribes and tribal organizations in Oregon have been supporting and participating in Pilot Project #100, the successful Oregon Tribes Dental Therapy Pilot Project which is set to expire in May 2022. Five dental therapists have been educated and three (one of which is myself) are delivering safe and competent care to their communities.

Proponents of HB 2528 have addressed concerns of some lawmakers and the Oregon Dental Association by removing some procedures from the DHAT scope of practice, moved many procedures to a higher supervision level, and limited eligibility of education programs to those either approved as part of the state dental pilot projects, or those accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation.

I would like to mention that even when I am able to obtain a license in the state of Oregon, I will STILL have a practice agreement with each supervising dentist I work with, and each plan depends on my comfort level and the comfort level of my supervising dentist. I have been paying close attention to all public hearings this session and this has been a discussion that I feel would be answered with the statement above. Although a dentist may have it in their scope of practice to do a root canal, they may not offer that treatment if they don't feel comfortable in doing so. And this is the same for my scope of practice as a Dental Health Aide Therapist.

By supporting HB2528 A, you're saying YES to allowing me to continue to work with fewer barriers, and to continue to provide basic dental care for our most deserving people.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,
Kari Douglass, Dental Health Aide Therapist
NARA Dental