

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 Lisa Rowley, I am a dental hygienist, and I reside in Portland. I am also the Advocacy Director for the Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA). The ODHA supports House Bill 2528 that would create a licensed dental therapist for Oregon.

Dental therapists are midlevel dental care providers who work with a dentist in the way that a physician assistant works with a physician. Dental therapists can expand access to dental care for Oregonians by helping dentists to provide more dental care to more people at a lower cost.

Dental therapists can provide routine dental care such as drilling & filling teeth, placing temporary crowns & extracting loose teeth, thereby freeing up the dentist to provide more complex dental care to other patients at the same time. Dentists in other states have found that adding a dental therapist to their practice is an efficient and cost-effective way to expand access to dental care while maintaining the safety and quality of dental care that all patients deserve.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation has developed nationally accepted accreditation standards for dental therapy education programs that are being used to develop and evaluate dental therapy education programs. The Commission has an obligation to the public, the profession and prospective students to ensure that the dental therapy education programs they accredit are providing appropriate education, training and experiences for dental therapy students, just as they do for dental students.

Oregon's dental pilot project #100 has already demonstrated that dental therapists, working alongside dentists in tribal communities, are providing safe, effective and culturally appropriate dental care to our native population that has long suffered from a high incidence of dental disease and limited access to dental care. This same model can be used to help dentists extend dental care to other vulnerable and underserved populations throughout Oregon.

In closing, the Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association supports 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.