

House Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE. Same, OR. 97301

Subject: Significant Concern with HB 2528

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Vice-Chair Salinas,

My name is Dr. Andrea Laidlaw, and I am an orthodontist practicing in Hillsboro, Oregon. I attended the University of Puget Sound where I studied biology. I then was accepted to Dental School at Oregon Health Sciences University where I earned my Doctor of Medical Dentistry degree. I then was accepted into the Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics Residency and became an orthodontist. I have served in organized dentistry, have been an associate professor at Oregon Health Sciences School of Dentistry and have been in private practice for 21 years, where I see over 350 new patients each year ranging in age from 6 to 80 years old. As such, I am well aware of the access to care issues we have in some areas of Oregon. A percentage of my patients are from lower income areas and do not have dental insurance to help cover dental care, or travel from communities that are further away to be able to come see myself or other specialists or dentists. I can see that there may be benefits to the establishment of a dental health aid therapist program, but only if the scope of practice and level of training is sufficient to ensure that patients are well cared for. It is unacceptable in my opinion to proceed with a plan that would establish a role in which the new provider is ultimately significantly underqualified to provide safe and effective care to whatever population they serve. Underserved populations are no less worthy of care from highly competent and thoroughly trained providers than populations in larger or more affluent communities.

HB 2528 is establishing a pathway to create the dental equivalent to a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner. The pathway to become a physician's assistant or a nurse practitioner requires a bachelor's degree followed by an additional three years of rigorous training before this individual is able to practice. This proposed bill omits significant areas of training, oversight, and standardized accreditation. It allows an individual 2 years out of high school the ability to go out and perform irreversible surgical procedures on patients with little accountability to national and local standards as written in the Oregon Dental Practice Act. The technical aspects of performing dentistry are difficult, require extensive training, and are truly only half of our job. The other, and arguably more important half, is having the education to diagnose disease and plan safe and appropriate treatment while having an understanding of an individual's often complex medical history. It is impossible for an individual with only two years of post-high school education to be expected to diagnose disease and pathology, safely deal with patients with complex systemic medical histories, be able to safely treatment plan patients' needs

without help and oversight from an experienced doctor, deal with medical emergencies that arise during and after treatment, and provide an acceptable level of care to patients that may not be able to advocate well for themselves if the care received is below the standard of care.

As I stated previously, I am not against the idea of creating a pathway for an assistant level dental provider similar to a PA. HB 2528 however, does not accomplish this goal safely or effectively. It does not meet CODA (Commission on Dental Accreditation) standard in a large number of areas. It is alarming that this bill would allow for a provider to practice outside both the existing standards and the scope of the accredited programs in the United States. It seems more logical to offer a two-year continued education program to hygienists who want to further their education to then become certified as dental therapists. In this way we are already starting with an individual who has had extensive training in oral and systemic systems, is certified, and has a proven track record of providing acceptable care under direct dentist supervision.

I urge you to please not pass this bill out of committee without significant revision to ensure patient safety and normal standard of care. Neither of these things are possible as the bill is currently written. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Laidlaw, DMD