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February 25, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon, 97301

Subject: My Concerns with HB 2528

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Salinas,

I have many reservations regarding HB 2528. For background, I am a pediatric dentist and have been in practice in Gresham for over 30 years. If passed as is, I feel this bill is too broad of scope and would create a dental provider that has insufficient background training. This puts the public at risk for harm and substandard care. The simple question is would you, yourself, let the dental therapist treat you? Would you take your child or grandchild to the proposed dental therapist? If one cannot answer yes without hesitation then why are we trying to pass this bill?

Under the guise of providing dental care for uninsured and low-income populations, unless the dental therapist is paid a salary by a sponsor or government agency, how will they maintain a financially viable practice? The likely scenario is a dental therapist would locate in a populous area where a large enough patient base could be obtained to remain solvent. If the committee believes the Oregon Health Plan will be ample compensation then it is not aware that the reimbursement rate is about 37% of usual and customary fees. An extremely efficient dental office has overhead expenses starting at 50% so it is impossible for a dental practice to survive treating a large volume of Oregon Health Plan patients. I believe, instead of creating dental therapists, a much more effective means to provide access to care for low-income patients is to fund the Oregon Health plan such that reimbursement rates are at least above overhead costs. Many more dentists would be willing to see Oregon Health plan patients if they could at least break even.

While I feel dental therapists have a place in Oregon's dental care, I feel HB 2528 is much too broad in scope and needs to be more in line with standards developed with the Commission on Dental Accreditation.

Please do not move this bill out of committee without substantial revisions to ensure patient safety.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Park, DDS

Gresham, OR