



From the desk of
Representative Tracy Cramer
Tracy Cramer

OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Vote No on HB 2996 and 3223

There is a nationwide shortage for dental assistants. HB 2996 and 3223 have been introduced in an effort to reduce the workforce shortage of dental assistants by removing the written exam currently required for certification in Oregon. As a previous dental assistant for 10 years, I have grave concerns about these two bills.

Dental assistants take x-rays, perform critical infection control duties, and perform direct patient care in a patient's airway. In health care and other professions, the certification process normally includes passing a written examination offered by a third-party testing agency. These written examinations are developed by content experts and represent the minimum national standard for knowledge and understanding expected for that profession. Written examinations should not be viewed as an administrative barrier, but rather as an essential qualification to be a health care provider.

The Oregon Board of Dentistry has clearly defined the dental assisting pathways available in Division 42 of the Oregon Administrative Rules which already include a pathway for rural areas that do not have access to a formal training program.

If passed, these bills will prohibit the Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring written examinations as part of the certification process for dental assistants in Oregon.

Removing written exams will do the following:

- Put patient health and safety at risk
- Lower the quality of patient care
- Devalue the dental assisting profession by watering it down
- Lead to higher turnover rates and even greater workforce shortages

Dental assistants and much of the dental community were not consulted about these bills. Many dentists are raising concerns about patient safety and liability. In addition, the Oregon Dental Assisting Association and Oregon Dental Hygiene Association oppose these bills.

For all these reasons, **I respectfully ask you to vote no on HB 2996 and 3223** to maintain current standards for dental assistants in Oregon and keep the public safe.

Thank you,

Tracy Cramer

