

Testimony in opposition of:

Senate Bill 441: An Act Relating to dental care providers; that directs the State Workforce and Talent Development Board to create and maintain dental assistant training modules available to the public free of cost.

Dear Senator Patterson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Submitted by Virginia Jorgensen, CDA, EFDA, EFODA, AAS.

I recognize and appreciate that much of Bill 441 supports education of dental assistants including, *“The Higher Education Coordinating Commission shall award grants to community colleges in this state to support the development and marketing of, increased enrollment in and scholarships available for training programs for dental assistants and dental hygienists.”*

My opposition is to Section 3,(2): *“The State Workforce and Talent Development Board shall create and maintain a dental assistant training module that is available to members of the public free of cost.”*

I have been a dental assistant in the state of Oregon for 50 years. I was given the opportunity to be trained on-the-job (OJT) because the Oregon Board of Dentistry provided a pathway for OJT's that included approved education and required examination. I attended approved courses through Oregon Health Science University School of Dentistry, Continuing Education Department (OHSU), studied and successfully completed written and clinical examinations to become a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA), an Oregon Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA) and an Oregon Expanded Function Orthodontic Assistant (EFODA). Over the years the pathways to obtain dental assistant certification have improved and provided a large percentage of the current dental assistants in the state of Oregon an opportunity to become a dental professional.

Because of this opportunity my position as an OJT dental assistant became more than just a “job”. I felt pride and accomplishment that led me to other career opportunities.

The “gold standard” to obtain dental assistant education and training is by attending an Oregon Community College Dental Assisting Program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Not all of those who want a professional career can attend an “in-person” program for many reasons; cost, time, travel, family and job obligations. That is why the Oregon Board of Dentistry has provided alternative pathways to obtain certification by working with the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) who is a testing agency that serves all 50 states.

Within the Oregon Board of Dentistry, Dental Practice Act Division 42 Rules for Dental Assistants, the pathways for dental assistants to be trained on-the-job through the support of the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) and The DALE Foundation can be found. Dentists can train their own dental assistants by following these pathways. High quality education modules and examinations have been developed by subject matter experts (SME's) and are reviewed, updated and maintained on a regular basis.

As a career dental assistant, training specialist and educator I urge you to amend Senate Bill 441 to strike Section 3, which calls for the creation and maintenance of a dental assistant training module, and to strike Section 8 that calls for funding the provisions of Section 3. Online education and clinical checklists are already available at a low cost. I do not understand why new modules need to be developed.

I believe a solution to the dental assistant shortage should include the Oregon Dental Association, the Oregon Community College Dental Assisting Programs and the Oregon Dental Assistants Association working together to develop education and recruitment tools that will encourage interest in the profession and help to retain those who are currently employed as dental assistants.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Jorgensen, CDA, EFDA, EFODA