

February, 9 2023

Dear Chair Nosse, and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Alexandria Case, and I have worked in dental education for nearly 20 years. I'm a trained and certified dental assistant, and have served as an oral radiology technician and instructor for more than 11 years. I love all aspects of my role as a dental instructor but one thing I love most is giving my students information pertinent to their everyday jobs – education that they will use.

In my role specifically, I teach a radiation health and safety (RHS) preparation course for individuals who want to be able to take oral radiographs on dental patients. My duty as an oral radiology instructor is to ensure students understand oral radiology history, safety measures, physical placement and angulation. After successful completion of my course, students are prepared to take the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) Radiation Health and Safety Exam and can then become certified through the Board of Dentistry. That certification, which is posted for patients to see, shows patients and staff that the individual has successfully completed the required training.

**I write today in opposition to HB 2996**, which eliminates the requirement for dental assistants to take the DANB Radiation Health and Safety Exam. With the shortage of dental assistants in the industry, I appreciate that the intention of the bill is to increase the number of trained dental assistants. Unfortunately, eliminating the regulated exam and training required to take radiographs would do this at the expense of patient and operator safety.

Oral radiology has evolved in many ways through the years. When I first began as an instructor, we taught lessons about film and darkrooms with processing steps. The largest changes in oral radiology have come with the invention of digital imaging that reduces the amount of radiation to the patient. It's important to note, however, that digital imaging does not eliminate radiation.

CBCT and ICAT scans use a high dose of radiation to see the tiny details of scans. Most CBCT scans are 3-6 times more radiation than the typical panoramic image, which is a significant amount. An operator, who has not received the proper training in radiation health and safety, could repeatedly expose themselves and patients to unnecessary radiation due to user error because they were told it was safe or to just take another one until you get it. I know this is possible because I go into dental offices to calibrate teams on radiographs and find that even they are told that. Another common problem I see is operators not standing a safe distance away from the primary x-ray beam, putting themselves in danger. The sad part about radiation is that it's cumulative, so a dental assistant routinely taking radiographs unsafely, repeatedly exposing themselves to radiation, may not see the damage for years.

As an educator, I urge you to vote no on HB 2996 – standards exist to ensure the safety of patients and dental care teams and should not be eliminated.

Thank you,

Alexandria Case  
[Rainycase11@gmail.com](mailto:Rainycase11@gmail.com)