

Dear House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing a letter in opposition to House Bill 2979. I am a dental professional and dental educator in Oregon. While I do support several sections outlined in this workforce package bill, there are two sections of concern. As proposed in the current language I am opposed to the following:

SECTION 9. (1) The State Workforce and Talent Development Board shall develop an educational module that serves as an introduction to the profession of dental assisting. The board shall make the module available to the public at no cost.

SECTION 10. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropriated to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, out of the General Fund, the amount of \$2,000,000, for the State Workforce and Talent Development Board to carry out the provisions of section 9 of this 2023 Act.

The intent of this bill is to develop resources to support ongoing chairside training efforts for dental assistants in Oregon. However, there are already cost effective dental assisting training modules available through the Dental Advancement through Learning and Education (DALE) Foundation that support on the job training of dental assistants. The DALE Foundation offers interactive online educational courses and resources developed by educators and subject matter experts to provide participants the skills and knowledge with quality and high standards.

Additionally, Oregon has a community college that offers a dental assisting program with online classroom components in a modular format. There is a wealth of existing content and resources available. The need to recreate these resources does not exist and the request for \$2,000,000 to facilitate creation of an educational module is not an appropriate or necessary use of taxpayer dollars.

In the spirit of collegiality and collaboration, I appreciate the ongoing discussions regarding replacement of the current language outlined in Section 9. Makers of the bill have shared the following potential amendment:

Section 9 replace current language with:

Higher Education Coordinating Commission to convene and facilitate discussion among relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to: dental assisting education programs at community colleges and dental professional associations, to collaboratively create a website with information on dental assistant training. The website should include information on Oregon Board of Dentistry requirements, core education competencies required, and a list of existing resources of dental assistant training programs and education modules. The website shall be accessible to all dentists in Oregon without cost.

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission shall use the remaining funds in section ___ in consultation with the stakeholder group to help defray the costs for individuals seeking access to existing online dental assistant training materials.

Without the suggested amendments, I am in opposition to Section 9 and Section 10 of House Bill 2979. Through continued collaboration with stakeholders, I believe this bill can be amended to garner overwhelming approval to support each pathway to become a dental assistant in Oregon and help to address the critical shortage of dental assistants in our state. I look forward to seeing critical amendments to House Bill 2979.

Respectfully Submitted,

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