

Testimony in opposition of

House Bill 3223: Prohibits Oregon Board of Dentistry (OBD) from requiring applicants for certification as dental assistants to pass written examination. Requires board to adopt rules to establish alternative pathways to certification.

Representatives Nosse and members of the Behavior Health and Healthcare Committee,

I am in opposition of House bill 3223. This bill is written to prohibit certification exams but using alternative testing, as I understand it.

I have been an active dental assistant for over 55 years. I have worked and served on the Oregon Board of Dentistry, for over 30 years and participated on many of their committees including as a consultant involved in setting the standards for course materials and testing for the Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA) and Expanded Function Orthodontic Dental Assistant (EFODA). The dentists in Oregon asked for expanded functions and submitted what they wanted to the Oregon Board of Dentistry. Through the years there have been many changes by deleting some and adding others. There are new functions that require special exams. An example is the Restorative Exam that requires completing the same course and Western Regional Board exam that a dental hygienist completes. On the horizon the Local Anesthetic for dental assistants is another possible function for a dental assistant.

Dental assistants are certified through the Oregon Board of Dentistry division 42 Rules for Dental Assistants and not a licensed group. It is confusing to me why this has become a legislative issue since the dental assistants are governed by the Oregon Board of Dentistry and they have jurisdiction over dental assistants their duties, functions, and exams.

The next issue is the shortage of dental assistants and the elimination of existing exams. Why would anyone want to lessen the knowledge or ability of those serving or working with or on a patient and their safety by removing any standard? The Oregon Board of Dentistry has worked with a national testing agency, the Dental Assisting National Board for years. Assistants have been passing the exams for years and dentists know they can trust those with the knowledge needed to treat patients safely. Changing the testing in the hope of helping with the shortage is a totally different subject. Removing any standard might seem to help but if a dentist wants an assistant to work for the betterment of the practice, then respect would be a good place to start and a living wage rather than eliminate a standard. I encourage you to consider your future treatment in the dental chair and that of your family, children and grandchildren being treated by anyone less than a trained certified dental assistant.

As a professional dental assistant I urge you to oppose HB 3223.

Thank You,

Mary Harrison CDA emeritus, EFDA, EFODA, FADAA

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