

Submitter: Jared Thompson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2996

To whom this may concern:

My name is Dr. Jared Thompson, DMD, 2005 graduate of OHSU Dental School, past president of the Washington County Dental Society, former board member and Master of the Academy of General Dentistry, Fellow of the International Congress of Oral Implantology, Associate Fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry and volunteer coach for an 8th grade boys basketball team. I am writing this testimony in support of HB 2996 because as an owner of a small business, it has become increasingly more difficult to obtain and keep employees. Owning a business that cannot operate by working remotely is creating a big challenge for employers like myself who occasionally need to hire new help. Working in the health care industry, especially in the last few years has been a challenge. As oral healthcare practitioners we are forced to work closely with our patients and the perceptions of the pandemic and barriers created by them along with physical barriers encouraged and enforced by the governor and the OHA, it should be no surprise that employees seeking new employment would easily look passed the dental profession and search for a job with fewer restrictions.

Removing the requirement that dental assistants pass a written exam before taking x-rays would help take away one of those restrictions and provide better access for employers to a larger pool of applicants so we can be able to treat more patients.

When we are short staffed because we can't hire a person with the right qualifications, we are forced to limit how many patients we can treat which becomes an issue for access to care. When I volunteer with the Medical Teams mobile dental van, a service that provides free dental care to underserved areas, we often turn people away because we don't have enough volunteers that carry the required certification.

The Dental Assisting National Board is arguing that requiring the written exam is ensuring the safety of our patients. I would argue that having an understanding of radiation dosages, KVP and milliamperes is important but simply knowing those values does not eliminate the need to retake an x-ray, which is the main reason I believe a patient may get more exposure than they need to. Radiation dosages are preset values regulated by our radiology software and the observing dentist, and they are also routinely monitored by the Radiation Protection Service which is a division of Public Health in the OHA. Our machines and their respective dosages are frequently checked by this service to help protect the safety of the public. Beyond that, the dentist has the obligation to make sure that the assistant is taking the x-rays correctly in order to reduce the number of retakes. Taking x-rays is a skill learned over time and not something a person gets skilled at by simply passing a test. As a basketball coach, my players don't get good at shooting free throws by taking a test. They

improve by shooting free throws over and over again. Similarly, look no further than my own daughter who recently passed her written driving test to earn her driving permit. Passing that test does not mean she or anyone on the road is safe. She needs someone to 'right shoulder' her until she becomes proficient on her own. I urge you to consider passing this bill. We need to continue to evolve with the changing landscape of today's workforce and allow employers more opportunities to attract and keep applicants wanting an opportunity to get their foot in the door in the oral healthcare industry. I've had several assistants over the years that have moved on to further their careers by going into teaching, dental hygiene or even becoming doctors themselves. Removing the written test requirement will absolutely widen the pool of applicants for employers, reduce the shortage of employees imposed by the pandemic and ultimately provide more access to care for the public.

-Dr. Jared M. Thompson, DMD MAGD