

Submitter: Susie Cousar
On Behalf Of: community
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure: HB2996

"I am a Susie Cousar, a health educator, consultant for more than 30 years, and I am writing to urge you to vote no on House Bill 2996. This bill, if passed, would Prohibit the Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring dental assistant who apply for certification to pass a radiological proficiency exam and would allow certification of this assistant without any mandated testing of their knowledge about radiological use, safety and technical procedures. This is not good for dental professional own well-being or the well-being of the patients. Although useful in helping people get correct treatment and diagnosis of dental related health issues, even low level ionizing radiation has been linked to cancer and correlated with increased (over time) dental diagnostic procedure that include this radiation. Here is a 2018 summary of the research related to the Health effects from dental diagnostic x-ray-
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6341170/>

Please vote no on HB 2996 because it:

- Increases risk to patient and provider, alike
- Waters down the quality of care received by patients
- Devalues the dental assisting profession
- Could worsen the workforce shortage

Proponents of the bill believe it will solve the dental assistant shortage, but there are dental assistant shortages in every state, including in those states where requirements for entry into the field are much less rigorous than Oregon's. Removing a necessary safety measure will not solve the dental assisting shortage, and it could make it worse.

Removing the exam requirement devalues the dental assisting profession, making it more likely that dental assistants will leave for another career. Studies show that professional credentials increase career commitment and job satisfaction. Eliminating professional requirements does the opposite, while putting patients and providers at risk.

An objective radiation safety exam is necessary to protect patients and workers. The current exam, DANB's Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam, is convenient and accessible, and the content is validated and regularly updated. If this bill passes, it

will make Oregon the first state to prohibit use of an objective exam to assess whether dental assistants have the knowledge required to safely expose patients to ionizing radiation.

I strongly urge you to vote no on HB 2996.

Thank you for carefully considering what is truly in the best of both professional and patient in the dental office when making laws that can impact their safety and health. Lastly, please remember, prevention is the best remedy and a singular dose of something is not what is at issue with this bill's lack of oversight since it is rarely a single dose that is lethal, rather, it is the accumulation of ionizing radiation overtime that can potentially lead to a shorter and/or more chronically unhealthy life.

Sincerely, Susie Cousar, MS Public Health Education