

DATE: February 14, 2023
TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare
FROM: Amy Coplen, RDH, MS
SUBJECT: HB 2996 & 3223

Members of the Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare,

My name is Amy Coplen and I am the Program Director at Pacific University School of Dental Hygiene Studies. I have been an educator for the past 14 years and radiology instructor for 9 years.

I am writing to ask you to oppose House Bill 2996 & 3223 that would prohibit the Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring applicants for certification as dental assistants to pass a written examination for radiological proficiency.

I can tell you from experience that taking diagnostic quality radiographs is not as simple as pointing and shooting an x-ray tubehead. In fact most dentists are not comfortable taking them. They depend on their dental assistants and dental hygienists to take them. Below are two examples of images from a lecture on technique, one is useful for diagnosis and the other is not.



Image #1



Image #2

We use radiographs as a key tool in diagnosing disease. The first image could be taken by anyone with very little training and education, but would not be useful for determining disease because of the large amount of overlap between the teeth and would require additional radiation to retake it. The second image is taken by someone who understands the principles and techniques necessary to produce high quality diagnostic images. My biggest concern is that an individual could retake image #1 over and over and get the same result because they don't understand how to correct their mistake, ultimately exposing a patient to more ionizing radiation.

Those who support this bill state there is an extreme shortage of dental assistant and cite this examination and others as a barrier to entering the dental field. While the dental assistant shortage is

SCHOOL OF DENTAL HYGIENE STUDIES
222 SE 8TH AVENUE
(503) 352-7252
AMY.COPLLEN@PACIFICU.EDU
WWW.PACIFICU.EDU



prevalent, this bill does not provide a viable solution. Dental assistants are a valuable member of the dental health care team and should be educated at the appropriate level for the services they provide. They should also be compensated at the level of their responsibility and duties. The exams that are currently available for radiology and other expanded functions of a dental assistant are convenient, accessible and inexpensive. They are the minimum necessary to show competence in the duties being performed.

In summary, I ask for you to oppose the House Bill 2996 & 3223 on behalf of the safety of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Amy Coplen, RDH, MS
Program Director, School of Dental Hygiene Studies, Pacific University

SCHOOL OF DENTAL HYGIENE STUDIES
222 SE 8TH AVENUE
(503) 352-7252
AMY.COPLLEN@PACIFICU.EDU
WWW.PACIFICU.EDU