



DATE: February 14, 2023
TO: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare
FROM: Amy Coplen, RDH, MS
SUBJECT: HB 2979

Chair Nosse and 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.

I am writing to ask you to oppose House Bill 2979 in its current form.

One of the largest concerns I have is that the bill has excluded state university's and nonprofit universities from the requested \$5 million dollars to help expand, increase enrollment in and provide scholarships for dental assisting and dental hygiene programs. There are two dental hygiene programs in Oregon that are not in community colleges, Pacific University and Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT), and OIT has two locations, one in Salem and the other in Klamath Falls. By only including community colleges in the bill, a large portion of the potential workforce is being excluded. Pacific University alone enrolls 32 students per year and has a strong focus on developing dental hygienists who are ready to provide care independently with their Expanded Practice Permit in areas that lack access to dental care.

Dental therapy programs are also excluded from applying for funding. Dental Therapy passed in 2021 which is a midlevel provider in Oregon that can provide some of the services a dentist can provide like fillings in areas that lack access. There are currently no educational programs for dental therapy in Oregon. Pacific University is interested in starting a program for dental therapy and could benefit greatly for the ability to apply for this funding.

Sections 9 and 10 of the bill also need significant revision. Spending \$2 million dollars on the development of educational modules for the dental assisting profession is an unnecessary waivst of tax payer dollars. High quality modules for training already exist and should be utilized. I would also advocate for dental assisting educational programs that have developed innovative hybrid and online delivery models that are inexpensive, accessible and develop a well-trained dental assistant equipped to treat the public safely. These programs are often under-enrolled and dollars would be better spent investing in educating potential students on dental assisting as a viable career option. Without significant revisions to sections 9 & 10 and the inclusion of both public & private non-profit universities and dental therapy in section 1, I urge members of the committee to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

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