Opposition to House Bill 2979

Dear Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

My name is Melissa Gutierrez. I am a dental assistant and currently an Instructor for the Dental Assisting Program at Chemeketa Community College. While I do support several sections outlined in this workforce package bill, I have some concerns regarding section 9 and 10 of House Bill 2979 in its current language. This section is asking for $2 million dollars to create free, chairside training modules.

I feel that there are already dental assisting training modules available at a very reasonable price through The DALE Foundation. These modules support on the job training in rural areas that do not have access to formal dental assisting programs and are updated regularly by educators and subject matter experts to provide participants the skills and knowledge with quality and high standards. This allows anyone immediate access to chairside training content and allows the dental assistant to be trained on the job.

Also, Portland Community College offers a 9-month program that can be completed in either a hybrid or 100% remote model for rural areas that want access to more advanced dental assisting training. This program is also designed to train on the job and is already being utilized by Kaiser Permanente and others.

Since training modules and remote programs are already available for rural areas, I ask that you amend House Bill 2979, Section 9 & 10. The $2 million-dollar funds are better allocated elsewhere.

We understand that there are conversations already occurring addressing the language and we look forward to working together and transparently with the supporters and sponsors of this bill. We believe this bill can be amended to gather overwhelming approval to support each pathway to become a dental assistant in Oregon and help address the critical shortage of dental assistants in our state. This is something that will require long term changes. Let's work on this together and transparently.

Thank you for your time and consideration.