

17 April 2023

Senate Committee on Health Care

Re: House Bill 2996

Dear Chair Senator Patterson, Vice-Chair Senator Hayden, and members of the Committee;

Precisely how does eliminating the requirement that Dental Assistant applicants pass the written examination for radiological proficiency benefit Oregonians? In two words or less.... it doesn't. Written examinations have a long history in a wide-ranging demographic of the population of being a proven measure of determining competency in many occupations.

House Bill 2996 is a shining example of the growing trend in our state that "*need*" defines what is right, as if *need* is a source of some sort of entitlement. It promulgates the idea that people must merely *want* something in order for it to be accepted as a best course of action. HB 2996 suggests that the *earned* is too difficult, but the *unearned* is a right. It fosters an attitude that one can achieve a goal without effort or cost. Worse yet, this bill having made it this far, condones the lowering of standards for certain health care providers.

A review of the written testimony submitted to the February 13th public hearing shows most Oregonians are not in favor of this bill, e.g., 119 letter writers opposed, including the Oregon Society of Radiologic Technologist, and Oregon Dental Assistants Association. Contrast those with the 6 supporting letters - one of which was from the bill's sponsor. Witness Registration records for that hearing show eighteen (18) in opposition and ten (10) in support. These numbers are not in the least ambiguous.

Even our own Oregon Health Authority testified, and while "neutral" on the bill, had this to say, "... the bill would result in dental assistants being the only dental professional group not required to pass a Board examination (or comparable examination) in Radiation Health and Safety to operate dental X-ray devices." Where's the common sense in all this? Is there any? Do you see it as benefitting Oregonians at large?

According to the Committee's staff analysis there is no 'revenue impact' and only 'minimal fiscal impart,' so what then - or whom—is influencing the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care to come up with a unanimous 'recommendation to pass' during their 07 March work session? Is it merely - and some would say typically - replacing something that works with something that sounds good in the legislative rush to get bills through the process?

The bill's 3<sup>rd</sup> reading on March 16<sup>th</sup> resulted in its passing forty-seven to ten! I don't want to sound naïve but I'd like to keep believing that our elected officials, particularly *Representatives*, reflect the will of the people they serve while they are – *doing the people's work* – as it is sometimes referred to. But the above makes me more than a little curious how the this reversal of the majority of constituent's preferences came about.

That Committee's actions are reminiscent of another bill, HB 2015, during the 2019 Regular Session, in which the legislature voted 39-21 to remove proof of legal status as a requirement for obtaining a driver's license or ID. This was against the express will of the people that was so clearly shown earlier with Ballot Measure 88. Ballot Measure 88, a veto referendum, which would have provided driver cards to those who can't prove their legal residency, failed by a huge margin, 66% to 34% statewide, passing in only one out of thirty-six counties.

The action of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care indicate the trajectory of HB 2996 is headed in the same direction – that of ignoring the will of the people. Considering the testimony already heard it should be clear that voters (whose teeth - both yours and mine - will be worked on) are positively not in favor of doing away with the requirement that dental assistant candidates take – and pass – a written examination in proficiency before earning a certificate as Dental Assistant.

Not only do I urge the Committee to table this bill I urge the Committee to listen to the voice of the citizenry. Passing this bill will do nothing to bolster confidence in our legislators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Wisner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Wisner