

Testimony in opposition of:

House Bill 2996: Prohibits Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring applicant for certification as dental assistant to pass written examination for radiological proficiency.

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the Senate Health Committee,

As a long-time Oregon career dental assistant, dental trainer, educator, and patient, I oppose this bill that will eliminate the education and examination that has been required for dental assistants in the state of Oregon for over 50 years.

There were some misconceptions presented at the public hearing on Wednesday April 19th by Representative Pham and Javadi who are the chief sponsors and supporters of HB 2996 that I would like to address for the record:

1. Jill Lomax, Chemeketa Community College Dental Assisting Program Director requested a meeting with Representative Pham in February 2023. Representative Pham did not respond until a second email request was sent and a meeting was then scheduled for Monday, April 17th that both Jill and myself attended.
2. Representative Pham reported that Jill and I asked for him not to have the hearing. This claim is false. We asked to take a pause and look at ways we could work together to increase the numbers of people interested in becoming dental assistants by working with ODAA, the Dental Assistant Educator's Consortium and ODA. We did not ask to cancel the hearing.
3. I told Representative Pham that ODAA had presented to ODA in November 2021 ideas on how we could work together to address the dental assistant shortage. One of those suggestions was to encourage dentists to go visit high school healthcare career classes to present the career path for dental assistants and to invite community members to visit their dental practices for an opportunity to witness what a dental assistant does in their daily jobs. I suggested this would be an opportunity for ODAA and ODA to work together on a recruitment strategy and plan.
4. Representative Javadi stated rural dental assistants training on the job that are studying to take the RHS exam must self-study on their own, enroll in a weekend course for \$1000 or enroll in a program that is 2 to 4 hours' drive from their homes. I would like to point out that Oregon licensed dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants who hold the RHS certificate can apply to become an approved Oregon Board of Dentistry Radiology instructor. Dr. Javadi is an approved instructor and can teach in his dental practice to prepare dental assistants to take the RHS exam. He also stated that dental assistants are always under direct supervision of a dentist. Dental assistants who hold the RHS certificate, are allowed to expose radiographs under general supervision which means that a dentist does not have to be on the premises. This is listed in Division 42. In addition, there is an online RHS course sponsored by Portland Community College (PCC) for dental assistants who are employed in a dental practice. All the didactic course work is presented online (30 hours) with 2 required weekend days (16 hours) scheduled for the lab portion of the course that a student must attend on the PCC

campus. The rest of the training occurs in a dental practice where the student is under direct supervision of a dentist, dental hygienist or dental assistant who holds the RHS Certificate. The cost for this course is \$1250.00. Divided by 46 hours of instruction is \$27 per hour. <https://www.pcc.edu/schedule/spring/hda/ceu3423/>

To remove this exam will not improve the shortage of dental assistants in the state of Oregon. Other states who do not have dental assistant radiation rules in place are experiencing the same shortage. Why remove something that has worked well for over 50 years and has been a benchmark for the safety of all Oregonians?

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Jorgensen, CDA, EFDA, EFODA
Oregon Dental Assistant Association Vice President