

Submitter: Takisha Pappas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: HB3223

I took the time to read many of the supporting and opposing testimonies. I agree with points from both sides. As a restorative functions dental assistant, I would oppose lowering standards because I feel that it undermines Dental Assisting as a career choice and will directly effect wage opportunities for dental assistants who are certified by flooding the workforce with people who did not invest the time and dedication into the career. A lot of the supporting testimonies that I read were from dentists, and I found that interesting. As long as dental assistants in Oregon are not licensed or required to have continuing education and they continue to be a dentists responsibility, I agree that dentists should be able to train them and attest to their capabilities, which is already a current pathway. I have been a dental assistant for 14 years and if I was given the test today, I can't say that I would pass. However, I am confident that any dentist I have worked with would be willing to attest to my ability to provide safe, competent patient care. As an office manager, I have hired assistants who graduated from certified programs and were lacking in actual functional skills. I have also hired assistants with no certifications who learned in the clinic and went on to take the test themselves to become certified. They are some of the best assistants that I have had. I would argue that the real reason behind the lack of dental assistants coming into the workforce, or staying past the 3 year mark is not testing barriers but rather the lack of training once on the job. I see many frustrated assistants and doctors and it comes from overwhelming patient numbers and lack of time and opportunity to properly train dental assistants to their full potential. I would argue against removing the testing as the multiple pathways already offered allow for people interested in dental assisting to become active in the field before required testing. Testing gives a baseline for dental assistants across the state so that they are able to explore job opportunities with other employers (not just who trained them to do it one specific way) and still have a strong foundation of knowledge.