

Representative Hai Pham, DMD
House District 36



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 5th, 2023

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means,

I am writing today to **share my strong support of [HB 2979A](#)**, the dental workforce package.

Oregon is in the middle of a workforce crisis. It will come as no surprise to many on the Committee that this workforce crisis has hit dental professionals especially hard as we are in urgent need of auxiliary staff such as dental assistants and dental hygienists to meet the needs of our patients.

As a pediatric dentist who has been practicing in Washington County for fourteen years both in the clinic and hospital settings, I have seen first-hand the impact our workforce crisis has had on our patients, especially our children.

HB 2979A is a \$20 million investment package that would address the dental workforce crisis by increasing capacity and access to training and education programs and expanding eligibility for incentives to all oral health professionals serving high-need areas.

This bill would build a pipeline from high school to college by investing in high school pre-health programs and college dental assistant and hygiene programs. This includes specifically engaging Tribes and Tribal organizations in this effort to engage youth in dental professional training programs.

HB 2979A would also enable all oral health professionals working in priority communities access to the Oregon Health Authority's Health Care Provider Incentive Programs to promote retention in these high-need regions.

Lastly, the bill would improve resources for dental assistant chairside training efforts across the state and ensure chairside training materials are developed in a collaborative process and leverage existing resources. This aspect of the bill is of particular importance, as dental assisting is one of the most challenging vacant roles to fill in the healthcare field.

I know how tight this upcoming biennium will be budget-wise and the tough decisions the Committee will have to make over the next few weeks. I would just urge the importance of **prioritizing oral health this session so we can provide some support to our hardworking dental professionals** as we navigate out of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure Oregonians get the oral healthcare they so desperately need.

This bill has also been a bipartisan effort and these investments are supported by a coalition of over 20 oral health and healthcare organizations. Please fund HB 2979A this session.

Sincerely,

Representative Hai Pham, DMD