



Native American Youth and Family Center

5135 NE Columbia Blvd, Portland, OR 97218 | p 503.288.8177 | f 503.288.1260 | nayapdx.org

March 2, 2021

To: Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Hayden, Vice Chair Salinas, and Members of the Committee

RE: Supporting HB 2528

For the record, my name is Rebecca Descombes, I am Inupiat and I serve as the Health and Environment Policy Coordinator with the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) located in Portland, Oregon. NAYA's wraparound programs directly serve over 2,000 individual Native American youth, adults, and Elders every year and positively impacts more than 10,000 Native Americans living in Portland's growing Native American community a year. Today, I am writing in support of HB 2528.

Across Oregon, especially for Tribal and urban Native communities, people of color, low-income households, and rural residents need access to basic dental health care. American Indian/Alaskan Native people carry a disproportionate burden of oral disease and lack of access to consistent, routine, and preventative care to improving oral health. Dental therapists are primary oral health care professionals with the training to provide the basic dental care that many Oregonians cannot get today – exams, fillings, and simple extractions. Dental therapists are often recruited from the communities in which they go back to serve, staying in those communities long-term with living-wage jobs and providing culturally relevant care. Dental therapy addresses unmet oral health care need in these communities and provides huge cost savings to the overall health system.

On behalf of the Native American Youth and Family Center we urge your support of HB 2528 and expand dental care access in Oregon.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Descombes". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rebecca Descombes
Health & Environment Policy Coordinator
Native American Youth and Family Center