

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2528
March 4, 2021

Chair Prusak and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

My name is Susan Kramer and I reside in Portland. I have been a registered dental hygienist in Oregon for 35 years, active in the Oregon Dental Hygienists Association, and a longtime examiner for the Western Regional Examining Board, a national dental and dental hygiene testing agency.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2528 that would amend the Dental Practice Act to create licensed dental therapists for Oregon.

We know that good oral health is an essential part of overall health, it is critically important to ensure that all Oregonians have access to high quality, affordable dental care and prevention. Today, some Oregonians, particularly those who are low income or who live in underserved communities, do not have access to the type of high-quality dental and preventive care that many of us take for granted.

Adding dental therapists as another category of dental provider will be an important step in addressing these inequities.

Dental therapists will work with dentists the way that a physician assistant works with a physician -- by providing basic restorative dental services for more people and at a lower cost. It will also free up dentists to provide more complex restorative treatments to more patients.

The evidence is there. Patient data from the past 10 years shows that dental clinics in Minnesota that employ dental therapists see more patients, provide more services, and increase gross revenues according to a study from the Pew Charitable Trusts. In addition, Dental Pilot Project #100 has shown that dental therapists in Oregon can provide safe & appropriate dental care under the supervision of a dentist.

I urge you to support House Bill 2528. It will allow dentists to work with dental therapists to expand access to dental care in Oregon.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Susan Kramer RDH, BS. MBA