



3/4/2021

Re: Support for Dental Therapy Licensure

To: Chair Prusak, Members of the House Health Committee

I write today to convey the Oregon Rural Health Association's unwavering support for HB 2528 and establishing dental therapists as a licensed provider here in Oregon.

Oral health *is* health. Yet for far too many Oregonians, access to oral health care is limited. **Over a million people in Oregon live in areas that have a shortage of dentists. This problem is particularly acute in rural areas—twenty-four rural and frontier primary care service areas have zero dentist FTE.**

Oregon has had great success expanding access to physical health care by allowing mid-level providers to practice in Oregon as part of a care team. That's what this bill seeks to accomplish for dental health care.

The licensure of dental therapists offers a low-cost means of expanding access quickly for Oregonians. The model proposed in this bill would require dental therapists to be trained by a 3-year accredited program (using the same accreditation body used for dental schools), or to be approved as substantially equivalent by the Board of Dentistry. As a practitioner, each dental therapist would be supervised by a dentist via a practice agreement. That practice agreement dictates the level of supervision, circumstances when a dental therapist must consult with the dentist and any other limitations on the care a dental therapist may provide.

This is a thoughtful, measured approach to increasing access to oral health care in Oregon. Please join us in supporting HB 2528.

Respectfully,
Sam Barber