

May 10, 2021

Re: Supporting HB 2528

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Manu Chaudhry MS, DDS. I am the President and Dental Director for Capitol Dental Care (CDC). We are a Dental Care Organization (DCO) that provides care to Oregon Health Plan (OHP) beneficiaries, through contracts with Coordinated Care Organizations (CCO) across the state. Also, I am an OHP Medicaid provider and I provide dental services to Oregonians. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Increasing access to basic dental care not only reduces the burden of preventable oral health disease, but also supports overall health. Lack of access to routine, preventive dental care has long been an issue for many Oregonians, especially in rural communities, communities of color, and low-income communities across our state. Dental therapy addresses unmet oral health care needs in rural and underserved communities and provides huge cost savings to the overall health system while most importantly preventing compassion fatigue and attrition of all healthcare providers.

Dental therapists are primary oral health care professionals with the training to provide basic dental care that many Oregonians can't get today — exams, fillings, and simple extractions. Evidence is clear that dental therapists have been safely and successfully practicing in the U.S. for more than 15 years and they are currently working in Oregon under successful but limited pilot programs.

The proponents of HB 2528 have come to the table in good faith to try and address concerns of some lawmakers and the Oregon Dental Association by removing some procedures from the scope of practice, and moving many procedures to a higher supervision level. However, there remains a few changes that need to be worked out in this committee.

We urge you to support HB 2528-A with the following changes:

- Include the intent section (from -4) to help guide rulemaking and implementation of bill
- Clarify that graduates of education programs that were approved as part of an Oregon pilot project are eligible for licensure even if the pilot project has ended.
- Remove arbitrary date by which graduates of CODA accredited programs can apply for licensure. Right now the bill limits applicants before 2025 to only those that are part of an active pilot project. If another education program in Oregon were to be accredited before 2025, those graduates would not be able to apply for licensure as the bill is currently drafted.

Please support HB 2528 and expand dental care access in Oregon!