

HB 2979 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to establish program to issue grants to community colleges to promote and increase dental assistant and dental hygienist training programs in the Oregon. Appropriates \$5,000,000 General Fund to HECC for grant program. Directs Department of Education (ODE) to establish program to issue grants to school districts or education service districts to promote and increase career and technical education related to dental health professions. Appropriates \$5,000,000 General Fund to ODE for grant program. Directs Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to issue grants through health care provider incentive program to support and increase recruitment and retention of dental professionals, prioritizing rural areas, low-income communities, and tribal lands. Appropriates \$7,000,000 General Fund to OHA for grants. Directs OHA to develop and implement an education and mentoring program to promote the entry into dental professions by members of Indian tribes in Oregon. Appropriates \$1,000,000 General Fund to OHA for education and mentoring program. Requires State Workforce and Talent Development Board (WTDB) to develop educational module available to the public at no cost to serves as introduction to dental assisting profession. Appropriates \$2,000,000 General Fund to HECC for WTDB development of education module.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

According to the 2021 report of the Oregon Health Care Workforce Reporting Program, access to dental care varies across the state, with worse access in some rural areas. Statewide, there were 0.49 dental patient care full-time employees (FTE) per 1,000 population, with urban and rural/frontier averages of 0.57 and 0.33 FTE respectively. According to the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), 32 of Oregon's 36 counties are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas without a sufficient number of dental clinicians to meet the needs of the community, including no dentists in 24 rural and frontier primary care service areas. The Oregon Health Care Workforce Reporting Program also found that dental clinics experienced the greatest loss of employment from the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared with other medical settings.

House Bill 2979 would provide direction and funds to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Oregon Department of Education, and Oregon Health Authority for programs and initiatives designed to increase the number of dental professionals in Oregon.