

Dear House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I am writing a letter in opposition to House Bill 2996. I am a dental professional and dental educator in Oregon. This bill, if passed, would prohibit the Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring dental assistants to pass a written radiological proficiency exam before taking dental x-rays. Of concern, this bill would allow dental assistants to expose patients to ionizing radiation without passing a competency exam that focuses on radiation health and safety.

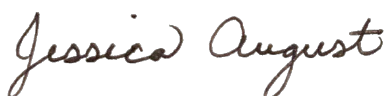
The mission of the Oregon Board of Dentistry is “to promote quality oral health care and protect all communities in the State of Oregon by equitably and ethically regulating dental professionals.” House Bill 2996 violates the mission of the Oregon Board of Dentistry as it does not promote quality oral health care and does not protect all communities. More specifically, House Bill 2996 puts dental professionals and the patients served at risk.

Ionization radiations are harmful and produce biologic changes in living tissues. Ionizing radiation has been linked to the induction of cancer, birth abnormalities, and genetic defects. Dental professionals who expose radiographs must have a working knowledge of radiation biology, the study of the effects of ionizing radiation on living tissue, and understand the harmful effects of radiation exposure. Essential knowledge and basic understanding are currently assessed through the radiological proficiency exam required for dental assistants in Oregon.

An objective radiation safety exam is necessary to protect both patients and workers. The current exam, the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam, is recognized or required in many states. The RHS exam assesses knowledge on purpose and technique, radiation safety, and infection control and prevention. Candidates have the option to take the RHS in-person or through online proctoring, making the exam convenient and accessible. Additionally, the exam content is current, validated, and updated on a regular basis.

If House Bill 2996 passes, Oregon would be the first state to prohibit use of an objective exam to assess whether dental assistants have the knowledge required to safely expose patients to ionizing radiation. Eliminating this professional requirement, as proposed by House Bill 2996, devalues the profession of dental assisting, while putting patients and providers at risk. I urge you to carefully consider what is best for the health and safety of Oregonians.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica August".

Jessica August, CDA, RDH, BSDH, MSDH
Tigard, Oregon