

Hello All! This is the first time I have ever written to our states representatives. It involves a matter near and dear to me. So I appreciate you taking the time to hear the voices of Oregonians across our great state. My name is Christina and I am asking you to please consider this letter in a

**Vote NO on HB 2996**

And this dental assistant will tell you why:

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The small board that created this bill is **out of touch with what Oregonians want**. These bills do not take into account the people of Oregon, nor did they listen to the healthcare professionals that do this work. We tried! Now, this letter is our last resort. Please hear our Dental Assisting voices, voices that speak for our patients that we vowed to protect and serve.

This bill will not fix the worker shortage, here are 4 reasons to vote no:

**1) Oregon Patient's Health and Safety Are At Risk**

*Ask yourself, "What would a patient want?"*

Radiation is cumulative, meaning that repeated exposure to ionizing radiation from medical imaging such as x-rays, can accumulate over time to substantial cancer-causing doses, thus exposing patients should only be done with proper training and oversight to protect the public. Radiation safety legislation is imperative to protect the patient, the operator, and the general public from radiation hazards. Currently by Oregon law, a Dental Assistant must pass a standardized "Radiation Health and Safety Test". This bill aims to take this requirement away! Literally anyone off the street can take Oregonians x-rays, with no requirements at all. Oregonians deserve better! That is why we have held this requirement in our great state, because we hold our healthcare works to a higher standard.

**2) Oregon Workers Health and Safety are at Risk**

*The fact is that untrained individuals should not be taking x-rays!*

Let me ask you "Are x-rays on a pregnant person safe?" "What is radiation leakage, and how do you test for it?" "Where should I stand during x-radiation exposure, what angle and how many feet away?" If you don't know the answers, it is okay! The average person does not know a lot about radiation health and safety. You don't have to be a Doctor to know that an uneducated healthcare workforce is a dangerous one. This bill aims to remove the standards in place that ensure that these workers are competent in the duties they perform. If a DA cannot pass a "Radiation Health and Safety Test", they should not be taking x-rays! Period! Just like if a Doctor does not pass their board exams, they should not be practicing on patients. It is no different! We should not use a worker shortage as a reason to remove health and safety standards. It makes no sense and it is flat out dangerous. Removal of this safety test will be at the expense of the workers potentially hurting themselves and others.

**3) This Bill Increases the Worker Shortage**

*Let us get back down to Earth! Workers don't leave a job because of a test!*

Workers leave jobs for more substantial reasons such as hourly pay, benefits, and advancement opportunities. Currently thousands of Oregon dental assistants proudly hold

the "Radiation Health and Safety" credential. Many of these DA's move on to continue their education, complete more exams, and hold more credentials. These credentials build a skilled workforce. This bill will be removing the one Safety Test requirement we have, thus creating an entry level position that can be filled with no experience, and no credentials. This bill will lead to thousands of credentialed Oregon Dental Assistants being replaced with lower paid, and less experienced workers. This bill does not help the shortage; it creates a catastrophe.

**4) This Bill Will Cause Oregon to have an Uneducated and Unskilled Dental Healthcare Workforce**

*Don't we want the best talent in the world to take on the best missions of the world?*

I must inform the general public of what DA's do! It is a hazardous and heavy direct patient care position. Daily we are exposed to blood borne pathogens, infectious disease, chemicals and radiation. We are responsible for so many aspects of a patient's appointment, from sterilizing critical instruments, disinfection of the operatory, procedures and patient care, all the way down to taking out the garbage and cleaning the floors; we do it all! We are the people that came to work alongside our colleagues during the Covid19 pandemic, armed in heavy PPE, risking our own health to care for our patients. Dental Assistant's know that this position is far from entry level! Please do not let this bill take away our hard earned credential. Dental Assistants show employers that they are skilled by building these credentials. This allows dental assistants like me to have advancement opportunities. Stripping thousands of Oregon DA credentials will take away these opportunities. This bill will stifle DA's pursuing further education; it will no longer be a career but a mere stepping stone to the next job. This bill may pad the pockets of our employers; but it will not fix a shortage. Real change is in workers getting paid living wages, decent benefits, and incentivized for professional development. This bill does none of that. It is more of the same.

**In conclusion:** There are many ways the dental community can come together to change the worker shortage. Passing bills that do not represent Oregonians best interest is simply not the right way. These bills should include the voices of ALL dental workers, not just a small panel of individuals. The OBD should consider working together with the American Dental Assistants Association, the Oregon Dental Assistants Association and the local community college DA programs, that all have great insight and ideas on ways to improve the worker shortage in a fiscally responsible way. Let us not forget that this is a profession that we all love, and we are all in this together.

On behalf of all of my fellow colleagues, we thank you for your time. We thank you for hearing our voices.

Christina R Becker  
EFDA, EFODA, CDA

