

Testimony in opposition of:

House Bill 2996. Prohibits Oregon Board of Dentistry from requiring applicant for certification as dental assistant to pass written examination for radiological proficiency.

Representative Nosse and members of the Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

In 1964 when I graduated from Salem Tech, now Chemeketa Community College, the State of Oregon was one of 3 states that required an exam to expose radiographs. Through the years the Radiation Protective Services has worked with the Oregon Board of Dentistry to continue that protection for the citizens in the state of Oregon. Dental assistants have served on their committees and most recently gave input that changes the requirements; that a thyroid collar must/is to be worn by youth when exposed to radiation/dental X-rays.

Through the years, the dosage of radiation has changed. However, the knowledge of setting the machines, anode and cathode, filaments, and focusing caps, remains important basic dental radiography concepts. The size of a patient and type of exposure makes a difference. Radiation is accumulative and not only is it important to the patient but those exposing patients. Dosimeters are often recommended for that reason. Successful passage of the DANB RHS Exam demonstrates the knowledge needed to perform radiation exposure safely. Knowledge of proper use of settings, correct placement and positioning of the X-ray tube to prevent retakes or over exposure, infection control during use, and disinfection and sterilization of reusable positioning devices are all required to successfully pass the DANB RHS.

The Radiation Health and Safety Exam (RHS) is typically the first exam an OJT dental assistant takes and the first step which allows progress toward becoming a chairside dental assistant and important dental team member. The RHS exam is a requirement to allow a dental assistant to become an EFDA, EFODA, obtain a Pit and Fissure Sealant Certificate and all other expanded duty certificates available to dental assistants through the Oregon Board of Dentistry Rules. It is the backbone of the education and training of all dental assistants.

Dental Assistants have been passing these exams for many years and enjoy being able to do more for their patients and the dentists who employ them. Why would anyone want to lessen a standard that has worked for years? The passing of this bill will in no way help with the shortage of dental assistants. Perhaps bringing the Oregon Dental Association, Oregon Board of Dentistry and the Oregon Dental Assistants Association together to discuss and implement a strategic plan to increase the awareness of the career of dental assisting would be more beneficial to the citizens in the State of Oregon rather than wasting the time in Legislature.

As a Certified Dental Assistant, I encourage and urge you to oppose HB2996

Thank you,

Mary Harrison CDA, emeritus, EFDA, EFODA, FADAA