



February 13, 2023

Chair Rep. Rob Nosse
House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee

On behalf of the Oregon Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (OSOMS), please accept this testimony in support of House Bill 2979. Oral surgery is a surgical specialty focused on reconstructive surgery of the face, head, neck and mouth, and jaws. Oral Surgeons rely on dental assistants both in the office, as well as in their surgical suites. Over the last few years, OSOMS members experienced a deep decline in dental assistants partially due to the pandemic. While some DAs returned after the height of the pandemic was over, many surgeons continue to raise concerns about DA shortages. We know if DAs have yet to return to their surgeon employer, it's likely they will never return. Oregon needs new innovative solutions to encourage the practice of dental assistants; through encouragement of high school programs, additional funding for community colleges, supporting our tribes and creating a chairside training assistance program.

This chairside training piece is of particular importance for oral and maxillofacial surgeons. Many DAs lack the knowledge of assisting with complicated oral surgery cases. These cases are often much different from those performed in a general dentist's office. The ability to train hands-on, within a surgery suite, is the best way to train these DAs.

House Bill 2979 is a necessary bill to support and encourage more DAs to enter the profession. Please support this legislation and move it forward in the process.

Thomas Kolodge, DDS, MD
President

Oregon Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons