

Submitter: Kari Hiatt

On Behalf of:

Committee: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB3223

I have been a dental assistant educator since 2005. I currently teach in a program that requires students to take the written Oregon EFDA (OXRG) exam and complete specific hands-on EFDA skills on patients as part of the requirements to earn the Oregon state EFDA certification.

I have concerns about HB 3223, as the passage of this bill would remove the requirement for dental assistants to take the OXRG, or state EFDA exam, included in most of the pathways as a requirement to earn an EFDA credential in the state of Oregon.

The intention is unclear why the bill calls for new “alternative pathways” to certification when the current rules already allow for on-the-job training by a dentist, followed by an objective assessment of knowledge. The pathways to certification are broad enough to permit a wide variety of learning modalities and formats to accommodate many different candidate circumstances. What has made this approach successful is that employers are able to verify that equivalent knowledge has been acquired across all these formats when candidates pass the same objective exam at the end of training. Removing these exams will compromise the integrity of the current pathways and any alternative pathways to be developed in the future.

The alternative pathways, as proposed, appear to allow for a five-year period in which dental assistants who have not completed any specific training or education and have not passed any exams would be allowed or even required to provide clinical care directly to patients. I doubt that this is what was intended, but the confusion in these changes are likely to cause will not serve to expedite entry of new candidates into the profession. And, this potential for confusion reinforces the disappointment of the dental assistant and dental assisting educator communities that we were not invited to review or provide input on this proposal other than during these few minutes at this hearing.

The proposal contained in HB 3223 is vague, and it appears that it may even prohibit the Board of Dentistry from requiring dental assistants to complete educational courses that include written exams to qualify for dental assisting

certification in Oregon. How can educators assess student learning if there are no written exams during or at the end of the course of study? This may not be the intention, but dental assisting educators have not been consulted or given a chance to ask questions and provide feedback in advance of this bill's introduction, and so we have many unanswered questions.

I recommend that the committee set this proposal aside and ask its authors to conduct meetings with the employer dentist, dental assistants, and dental assisting educators, who will work together on making improvements to the current pathways in ways that don't compromise their integrity.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kindly,

Kari Hiatt, CDA, EFDA, EFODA, MS