

Submitter: Tana Spencer

On Behalf Of: access to care

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB3223

Working in Public Health Dentistry opens your eyes to many things. One of them being that the lack of dental assistants is not the cause of a lack of access to dental care in Oregon.

A larger issue is the lack of dentists willing to provide services to underserved populations and the lack of dentists willing to take Medicare or Medicaid benefits as a service to our communities.

Perhaps looking at a requirement for dentist's license renewal of volunteer hours in underserved areas or requiring dental offices have a patient base of at least so many Medicare and Medicaid patients would help reach more patients in need.

Preventive programs like implementing statewide school education, fluoride and sealant programs show benefit. laws requiring dental hygienists to be on staff in care homes and in hospitals can decrease much discomfort and pneumonia.

The Oregon Board of Dentistry allows Dental Hygienists to attain permits that allow them to serve these populations. Yet, there are difficulties with reimbursement. Legislation allowing Dental Hygienists to work freely as independent contractors would open the floodgates of opportunity in underserved populations.

As it stands, his bill is self-serving, and there must a conflict of interest for Dr. Pham.