

# Opposition to HB 2996 and HB 3223

April 19, 2023

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care

Measure: HB 2996 & HB 3223

Position: Opposition

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

We, the undersigned dentists, oppose HB 2996 and HB 3223.

HB 2996 and HB 3223 eliminate and prohibit requiring standardized written exams for dental assistants to earn any state certification in Oregon, including any level of expanded functions dental assistant.

These two bills erode the dental assisting profession, while placing an even greater burden on dentists to educate and train their dental assistants – taking us away from practice management and patient care responsibilities, diminishing our productivity and capacity, and reducing our ability to provide the highest quality experience to patients.

Under these proposed bills, dentists would be forced to play the role of educator and be responsible for verifying the dental assistant has the required knowledge in a variety of expanded functions. On-the-job training is an important component of skills development for a dental assistant, but this should be in conjunction with a standard and objective measure of knowledge, like passing a written exam.

Inadequately trained dental assistants are a drain on dental offices and lead to higher costs – they impair productivity and reduce our capacity to see patients; they commit errors that we must spend time correcting; they diminish the goodwill we work hard to cultivate with patients; and many do not stay with the office long enough to improve, leading to vacancies and reduced capacity while we struggle to recruit and train their replacements. We expect these bills to make recruitment of qualified dental assistants even more difficult.

Proponents of HB 2996 and HB 3223 believe these bills will alleviate the shortage of qualified dental assistants. This could not be further from the truth. These bills weaken the pipeline of qualified dental assistants, reduce the professional standing of dental assistants, and dismantle the dental assisting career ladder, which will lead to fewer candidates choosing dental assisting as a profession.

What dental offices need now is support – our goal should be to support training programs, expand enrollment at dental assisting programs, and promote dental assisting careers in high school and middle school. What we do not need is the increased recruitment and training burden and the reduction in productivity and capacity that these bills will create.

We strongly urge you to vote no on these two bills.

Signed,

Abigail Rollins, DMD, Salem  
J. Travis Duffy, DMD, FAGD, Salem  
Darren Huddleston, DMD, Grants Pass  
Daniel E Blickenstaff, DDS, MSc, Issaquah  
Ben Sutter, DMD, Eugene  
Bruce Austin, Former OHA Dental Director, current Native American Rehab Association  
Dental Director, Woodburn  
Nadia Winstead, DMD, Salem  
Ruth Abraham, DDS, Keizer  
Kurt Ferre, DDS, Portland  
Renee Watts, DDS, Springfield  
Peter Raven , DDS, Springfield  
Beau Kapp, DMD, Jacksonville  
Mary Kay Schwab, DMD, Portland  
Kyle Crawshaw , DMD, Gresham  
Steven Blakley, DMD, Lake Oswego  
Richard Fixott, DDS, DABFO, FACD, Redmond  
Marc Nordstrom, DMD, Bend  
O'Neill S. Solanky, DDS, Salem  
Mary Beth Bowman, Woodburn  
Jonathan E Backer , DDS, Cottage Grove  
Terrence Clark, DMD, FAGD, Wilsonville  
Terri Baarstad, DMD, Eugene  
Bradley Powell, DMD, Junction City  
Matthew Schapper, DMD, Corvallis  
Darcy Olander, DMD, Salem  
Matthew Epperson, DMD MSD , Springfield  
Victoria Bonar, DMD, Salem  
Adriana Reppell, DMD, Eugene  
Larry Over, DMD, MSD, Eugene