

**Representative Hai Pham, DMD**  
**House District 36**



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Friday, May 5th, 2023**

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means,

I am writing today to **share my strong support of [HB 3007](#)**, a bill that would provide greater clarity to the role of the Oregon Health Authority's Dental Director and create an Office of Oral Health to promote evidence-based oral health disease prevention across the state.

**We have an urgent need in our state for a more coordinated approach to dental care delivery and policy-making.** Oral health has not been traditionally prioritized in our approach to healthcare policy, even within the Oregon Health Authority. This has been a problem for well over a decade, and the legislature attempted to address it in 2015 by creating the position of the Dental Director within the agency. **Thanks to the advocacy of our dentist-legislators, Sen. Girod and Sen. Hayden, the bill passed with unanimous support in both chambers.**

However, since then, we have only had two dental directors serve in the position and both departed OHA after short tenures. We did not have a dental director during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and policies out of the agency reflected the lack of oral health leadership during this critical time.

The Dental Director was intended to lead the state and agency in oral health care discussions and formalize the process in which oral health programs and research interact within the agency. But the position was not competitive enough, salary-wise, to draw in candidates, and the director did not have a support system in place to further their work.

HB 3007 will solve these issues by classifying the position as a senior executive position and providing the director with support staff in a new Office of Oral Health. A standing Oral Health Advisory Committee will also be created to provide OHA with critical oral health and public health expertise, including diverse perspectives from across the state to address issues our communities face.

By ensuring that oversight and direction of various oral health programs are under one roof, we hope to better align efforts across programs and maximize opportunities for federal support. In addition, the bill mandates data reporting from OHA to help appropriately allocate scarce resources.

I can tell you first-hand that patients, in particular children, are suffering due to our inability to swiftly address their needs. Kids are waiting 3+ months for treatment under general anesthesia in the hospital setting. This is in part because we don't have a coordinated state plan to improve oral healthcare delivery and outcomes, and the other reason is that we just don't have the workforce to meet our needs. **We need a strong dental advocate within OHA to help alleviate these concerns.**

OHA has requested FTE to fulfill the responsibilities of the bill, but **I believe that the agency can complete the duties of this bill with their existing resources.** This policy requires them to publish data they already collect, and they already have staff completing these functions.

I know this upcoming budget cycle will be tight and there are many tough decisions the Committee will have to make over the next few weeks. I would like to put this perspective forward for your consideration as you evaluate what programs to allocate funds to this session. **Please support HB 3007.**

Sincerely,

**Representative Hai Pham, DMD**