

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

For the record, my name is Leslie Greer. I am the program chair and faculty at Lane Community College. However, today I am speaking to you not as a representative of my school, but as a dental assistant with over 30 years of clinical experience and 20 years of teaching experience.

House Bill 3223, which you are considering today, is not good for the dental profession, or for patients. For the good of patients and dental assistants, we need three things:

We need Respect. I take great pride in my profession and my ability to serve patients. The credentialing process builds confidence and enhances job satisfaction and advancement. Undermining this process and watering down the requirements will discourage high-quality dental assistant applicants.

We need Support, and a better policy for Oregon dental assistants than this bill. It will not improve the workforce shortage, it will not encourage dentists to invest in their dental assistants, and it will not make patients safer.

We need Proof of Competence. Without an objective, standardized exam for dental assistants, risk to patients will be increased. Valid exams prove that we have the essential skills and knowledge to do the job. The standard should remain high, and WHEREVER you receive your training, the ultimate level of baseline knowledge and competency should be tested and met.

The latest version of 3223 only allows for a single exam in order to obtain a credential --- this includes certifications for both entry level and advanced levels of patient treatment.

For applicants that have not successfully completed an accredited dental assisting program, most of the expanded function credentials currently require two exams: one that covers competency in the certificate content knowledge, and one that covers infection control.

To meet the parameters of the revised version of 3223, we currently have 3 options:

- Eliminate the exam that covers content competency
- Eliminate the exam that covers infection control competency
- Or Combine the exams into 1 that covers both

None of these options are good.

With the current shortage of dental assistants, training is often left to the doctor, and focuses mostly on chairside skills. Not only do the doctors not have time to adequately teach cross contamination prevention, they are off to the next patient, leaving the new trainee on their own to handle infection control procedures. The exams for this content are needed.

As a DA program chair, I can tell you that combining the multiple exam content into a single exam would be detrimental to applicants that suffer from test anxiety. Students who deal with this often choose to schedule their board exams on different days, so they focus their preparations to a single topic to reduce stress.

And Taking the exams separately allows a straightforward path to job advancement. A dental assistant that has passed an exam (such as one that covers infection control) for one credential -- can apply that exam to multiple credentials – requiring them to only show knowledge proficiency in the content of the new certificate.

Through DANB, Oregon has 4 different pathways to obtain credentials no matter where you live. These pathways include accredited school programs, non-accredited programs, and on-the-job training options. No one is prevented from entering the dental assisting profession. They provide content courses for minimal cost, and cost of the exams is very low compared to

credentialing in other professions, both in and out of dentistry. The exams are created by content experts and updated to stay current as techniques, technology, and materials utilized in the dental field evolve. DANB is currently addressing the issue of diversity to offer the exams in multiple languages.

I don't know why all of the different test options included in HB 3223 would be needed, nor who would create and maintain them.

Just a few years ago, the clinical "check offs" required of job-trained dental assistants were reduced for expanded function credentials. Now, 3223 is asking for the exams to be limited or removed. The dental assisting profession that I have proudly helped advance over the last 40 years is being undermined. 3223 will be detrimental to dental assisting pride, respect, and job satisfaction in terms of both enhancement and advancement.

Dental assistants were not asked for their thoughts on these proposals at the beginning of the process, and the language in House Bill 3223 before you today reflects a misunderstanding of what is keeping applicants from entering or remaining in the dental assisting field. It also shows a lack of understanding of the importance of dental assisting competency. This bill will affect our profession, the safety of patients and providers, and the quality of patient care. I urge you to vote no on 3223.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns.