

Submitter: Kym Peterson  
On Behalf Of: Dental Assisting Professionals  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: HB3223

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

For the record, my name is Kym Peterson. I have been in the dental profession for 36 years. 18 of those years were spent working as a dental assistant and over the last 18 years I have been a Dental Assisting Instructor at an Oregon Community College.

Being a dental assistant and dental assisting educator have been personally rewarding careers.

Unfortunately, there is a national dental assisting workforce shortage including both Washington and Oregon, but the shortage is not less in Washington because of the decreased exam requirements.

If the pathways to dental assisting certificates in Oregon are to change, // dental assistants want and deserve to be a part of the process that could impact the integrity of their profession.

In 2013, 7,000 patients who had seen an Oral Surgeon named Dr. W. Scott Harrington of Oklahoma, were notified that during the past six years, poor hygiene at his clinics had created a public health hazard which had exposed Dr Harrington's patients to HIV, hepatitis, and other bloodborne diseases. It was reported that Dr. Harrington's dental assistants were required to employ techniques and services that only a dentist should perform, as well as being trained to utilize unsanitary sterilization procedures and handling of needles. At the time of this case, Oklahoma dental assistants were mainly trained on the job. DA training requirements have since changed in OK.

The benefit of well trained and educated dental assistants is to have staff that knows the state laws, are able to safeguard the rigor required for asepsis, disinfection and sterilization, as well as the skill level required at chairside. Anonymous testing that meets national standards is the only way to remove the human potential for bias. National exams require a minimal knowledge that consistently places well educated dental assistants in the dental field. It also minimizes the potential of dental assistants who enter our profession whose education is wholly based on their trainers' scope of knowledge, skill and ethics.

I do not support HB 3223. However, the newest amendment wishes to assemble an advisory group which I do believe will help to find solutions to the assisting shortage.

Unfortunately the amendment does not specify the makeup of this group. I am here today to advocate that a majority of the members of this group be individuals currently working as dental assistants from broad and diverse backgrounds. Ensuring that diverse voices representing dental assistants in Oregon be around the table to advocate for ourselves and our profession is critical to creating solutions to the workforce shortage.

Dental assistants are an essential part of a dental team. Participating in the legislative process takes time away from our team and responsibilities, yet we continue to take every opportunity to make our voices heard regarding HB 3223.

I am here on behalf of the many dental assistants who would be here today if there was no conflict with work schedules.

Please let our voices be heard and vote NO on HB 3223..