

February 18, 2025

Chair Nosse, Vice Chair Javadi & Members of the Committee
Senate Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
2025 Oregon Legislative Session,

I am writing to you in support of HB 2676 that if passed would enact the DDH Compact in Oregon.

I am a licensed dental hygienist in the state of Oregon with 28 years of experience. I was living in Newberg, Oregon and working at Dundee Family Dentistry until February of 2024, when I unexpectedly had to quit my job and move to Texas to care for my mother until her passing in August of 2024. In that timeframe, I began the process of collecting documents and getting the necessary certifications to satisfy the requirements to obtain a Texas dental hygiene license, in addition to my Oregon license. I submitted my application and all necessary paperwork to the Texas State Board of Dental Examiners (TSBDE) in early January, and after being told my application was incomplete, I resubmitted requested items and am presently awaiting licensure.

My experience as a hygienist moving to a different state and going through the process to get licensed has inspired me to write to you because I feel very strongly about changing how states credential and license active licensed dentists and dental hygienists and support the DDH Compact in Oregon. I had no idea how complicated, time-consuming, expensive and frustrating it would be trying to get licensed in another state. Additionally, I will be maintaining my Oregon license and paying the fees and taking the CE units required should I decide to move back. While I understand Texas is not part of the compact, I support Oregon in their efforts to make license portability easier on dentists and dental hygienists attempting to license themselves in other states. Ideally, I'd love to see it happen nationwide. In speaking to my colleagues whom have never moved since graduating, most are unaware of the detailed requirements, associated fees and the cost due to loss of income when applying for licensure out of state.

For example, here is my experience trying to get my license in Texas. I began casually requesting and gathering my documents in April of 2024, some of them sent directly to the board office from third party entities and others sent certified mail. Once I felt I had satisfied all the line items on the TSBDE credentialing list and was ready to mail in my application packet, I called the board to ask a question. I was told my paper application would be denied and sent back to me because it was an outdated form. The phone representative advised me to update the form and submit all documents via email instead. So, I scanned everything into files and I submitted them. Here is what they require and what I sent - a notarized application, a verification of my current active dental hygiene license in Oregon, a copy of my drivers license, college transcripts from 1997, national board results, regional board results, two self query reports that expire after 60 days from the date sent, CPR and BLS certification, 12 hours of CE units to include live/in-person lecture requirements from the past year, state jurisprudence certificate, a passport style photo, a human trafficking course certificate, a notarized affidavit from a licensed dental professional stating how long they knew me and how, and, in my case, my marriage license or divorce decree (Hygienist License – By Credentials – Texas State Board of Dental Examiners).

According to their website, processing of applications takes 3 - 4 weeks to review once submitted. Should you receive a response saying your "application was incomplete," you submit the items deemed incomplete and you go to the back of the line to have your submissions reviewed again, as was the case for me and several others I've spoken to. Here's

why mine was declined and why I'm still waiting to be licensed 5 weeks post application submission:

- as explained above, TSBDE changed the application form and said the one I had printed, completed and had notarized was outdated by a couple of months and needed to be updated by reprinting and notarizing again.

- they claim they did not receive some of my documents and that I'd have to resubmit them, yet I sent them certified mail. So, I resubmitted and paid the associated fees again and it has delayed the approval process.

- I was told I didn't have enough "live" CE hours. From TSBDE: *"Proof of completion of 2 live interactive/lecture hours of CE in accordance with TSBDE Rule §104.2. You submitted certificates dated over one year, unacceptable."* I had submitted via email proof of 5 units of live CE all taken within the past 6 months, so I called to question if the examiner had just missed seeing the certificates because I could prove I sent the attachments via email. I was told by a phone representative that she could only tell me exactly what was in the examiner's notes. I asked how to ensure I receive credit for my live hours that were somehow not factored in by the examiner. Her suggestion was to "just take more live units and submit those." I pointed out that I'd already satisfied the requirement, so more were not needed. Plus, I asked what guarantee I'd have taking "more hours" would be seen and credited, unlike the hours I'd already submitted? Her response was "I guess you'll just have to try." I resubmitted my original certificates via email with a note to the examiner, because you cannot speak to them directly, and just hope they will see them.

- I needed to send in a marriage license or divorce decree because my last name didn't match my transcripts and board results taken 28 years ago. Yet, my active Oregon dental hygiene license has my current name and was already verified through the Oregon dental licensing board when I married.

- my former boss, a dentist, sent in the notarized affidavit form and it was declined because he didn't write the exact dates of my employment with him. He wrote "June 2020 to February 2024." They wanted the specific days included. I had to email him another affidavit form and he had to have it notarized again. The phone representative expressed frustration at how many applicants get this wrong and "need to read line 4 where it states month/day/year." Well, as an applicant, I did not fill out that paperwork and was at the mercy of my former boss filling it out as stated. Hence, I am delayed again through no fault of my own.

- my self queries that expire every 60 days expired during the process so I paid the fees and ordered more.

I belong to several dental hygiene social media pages and see stories like mine frequently. One post in particular caught my attention from a local hygienist asking group members if TSBDE had lost their paperwork, just like me! I know 4 hygienists from the group who are all still waiting, the longest being since last May and others at least 6 weeks, with one delaying her move because she can't afford to leave the state she's coming from until she receives her Texas license. It should not be this challenging or time-consuming if we want to get our dentists and hygienists working. We have a nationwide shortage of dental hygienists, yet, we have qualified candidates ready to work while waiting on a bureaucratic system that is slowing the process.

I STRONGLY urge you to refer HB 2676 to the House with a do pass recommendation

Sincerely,

Wendy Studer, RDH, BS