

Priority Dental Issues for the 2014 Legislature

Washington State Dental Association

The Washington State Dental Association (WSDA) represents 4,100 dentists from every part of the state. Our ongoing mission is to support cost-effective, practical solutions that prevent disease and remove barriers to quality oral health for all Washingtonians. Washington dentists care about their local communities and volunteer their time and services providing more than 100,000 patients with uncompensated care each year.

Vote YES on HB 2467

WSDA supports allowing both embedded and stand-alone pediatric dental benefits to be offered within the Washington Health Benefit Exchange. Last year legislation was passed to allow embedded and stand-alone plans outside of the exchange; WSDA believes the same flexibility should be extended to purchasers using Washington Healthplanfinder.

Vote NO on HB 2321, HB 2466, and SB 6275

Addressing barriers to oral health is a complex problem without a one-size fits all solution. HB 2321, HB 2466, and SB 6275 are not a solution for Washington state.

- **HB 2321, HB 2466, and SB 6275 do not improve access.** These bills change nothing about the primary barrier to dental care: a chronic and persistent lack of funding for dental safety-net programs.
- **HB 2321, HB 2466, and SB 6275 do not make dental care more affordable.** Medicaid and patients will not be billed less for procedures performed by dental therapists.
- **HB 2466 and SB 6275 would create practitioners completely outside of the state's regulatory authority.**

Support Dental Residency Programs

Dental residents are a superior alternative to dental therapists. Unlike dental therapists, dental residents can treat more medically complex cases. Dental residents are a more efficient use of state funds. In most cases, federal funding covers the majority of resident-related expenses.

- Washington currently has 40 dental residency positions across the state.
- WSDA is working with community health centers in Toppenish and Walla Walla to expand clinic capacity and increase the number of residency slots (~\$750,000 in capital funding is being requested).

Support the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program

WSDA supports the restoration of funding for the state's loan repayment program. On average, dental students graduate with over \$200,000 in student loans. The loan repayment program attracts and retains health care providers to practice in rural and underserved areas by providing educational loan repayment assistance.

Vote YES on HB 1603

WSDA supports the creation of a dental licensure grace period that would allow dental licenses to remain unexpired and in full effect for thirty days beyond the scheduled renewal date.

Vote NO on HB 2445 and SB 6385

No state in the country has an independent dental hygiene board and WSDA has concerns with the creation of an additional rulemaking body with overlapping authority. WSDA and the Dental Quality Assurance Commission support the incorporation of dental hygienists on to DQAC as is done in almost every other state.

Definition of Dentistry

WSDA has concerns regarding any legislation intended to modify the current definition of dentistry to allow for ownership of dental practices by non-licensed individuals or business entities. WSDA and its leadership have and continue to support the current law regarding the ownership of a dental practice, and oppose any changes that would allow non-licensed individuals to influence or interfere with the professional judgment of a licensed dentist. Washington law should continue to ensure that dentists are first and foremost accountable to their patients and not non-dentist shareholders.