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Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I am a dental hygienist from your district. I would like to urge you to vote for Senate Bill 98 (SB 98) that would create a mid-level dental provider called a Dental Therapist and decrease restrictions on the scope of practice for licensed dental hygienists seeking to improve the health of Ohioans in all communities by increasing access to dental care. Not only will the bill help access to care, but it will help increase jobs in the area.

The dental therapist is supervised by a dentist working under their authority to practice in dental health provider shortage areas or in dental practices that accept Medicaid benefits. Currently in the state there are 88 dental health professional shortage areas per the Ohio Department of Health. In 2011, there were 59 professional shortage areas in Ohio; showing the continued growth of provider shortages across the state.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), an arm of organized dentistry, that oversees dental and dental hygiene student’s education nationwide has developed accreditation standards for dental therapist educational programs. CODA’s standard requires the education must be a post-secondary college level curriculum of 3 full-time academic years.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation reviewed 1,100 studies of dental therapist programs including Alaska and 54 other countries. The conclusion: the quality of the technical care provided by dental therapists, within their scope of practice was comparable to that of a dentist. Mid-level providers are highly skilled in routine and preventive care. The studies demonstrated dental therapists provide quality care to underserved populations. SB 98 allows a maximum 36 procedures (routine basic care) vs. the 400 procedures performed by dentists (basic and complex care).

States that utilize a Dental Therapist have decreased several identified barriers to access to dental care including:

* Lack of Medicaid or Medicaid coverage not accepted;
* Lack of dental insurance;
* Unaffordability of the cost of dental treatment;
* Long distance of travel or lack of transportation to dental office;
* Lack of dental providers in their community;
* Long wait time to get appointments.

Since 2011, Minnesota, Vermont, and Maine have passed legislation creating dental therapists and 13 states have introduced legislation to create this dental mid-level provider. To date, there have been ZERO patient standard of care complaints in Minnesota.

Please support SB 98!

Thank you,

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