



Representative Ivy Spohnholz

House Health & Social Services Committee Co-Chair

*Serving House District 16: College Gate, Russian Jack, Nunaka Valley, & Reflection Lake
Committee Member: Resources, Energy, & Legislative Budget & Audit*

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 127

Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

“An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene; establishing an advanced practice permit; prohibiting unfair discrimination under group health insurance against a dental hygienist who holds an advanced practice permit; relating to medical assistance for dental hygiene services; and providing for an effective date.”

Oral health plays a crucial role in the overall health and well-being of Alaskans. The lack of access to dental care in Alaska has created enormous need in communities that are underserved by the traditional system of care. Dental diseases disproportionately affect our state’s most vulnerable populations and rural areas where the access to treatment is limited. We need all dental health care providers practicing to the full scope of their training to address this issue. Alaska would benefit from implementing an innovative oral health care delivery model.

House Bill 127 would establish an Advanced Practice Permit for Alaska-licensed dental hygienists while continuing the collaborative agreement between licensed dentists and dental hygienists. Dental hygienists are skilled, licensed oral healthcare professionals who focus on preventing and treating oral diseases. HB 127 would allow dental hygienists who meet the necessary advanced education, experience and licensure requirements of the Advanced Practice Permit to work independently within their scope of practice across a variety of institutional and organizational settings, including nursing homes, schools, hospitals and clinics.

The creation of Advanced Practice Permits would allow access to individuals who need oral care but can’t get to a dental office because of illness or disability, create new consumer choices for preventive treatments and services, educate individuals, families, and caregivers on the basics of dental hygiene, and oral health’s connection to overall health and well-being. Additionally, licensed dental hygienists would identify more acute dental issues early on before they become serious and provide referrals for patients needing restorative treatment.

HB 127 removes barriers by allowing qualified, licensed dental hygienists to practice to the full extent of their professional training, experience and scope of practice to help promote and restore oral health to Alaska’s underserved communities.

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