



Representative Ivy Spohnholz

House Labor & Commerce, Chair

House Health & Social Services, Vice Chair

House Energy, Vice Chair

Serving House District 16: Anchorage

Sponsor Statement

HB 127 Version M: Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

“An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene; relating to advanced practice permits for dental hygienists; relating to dental assistants; 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 wellbeing of Alaskans. Barriers to accessing dental care in Alaska have created enormous need in communities which are underserved by the traditional system of care. Dental diseases disproportionately affect our state’s most vulnerable populations and residents of rural areas where access to treatment is limited. We need all dental health care providers practicing to the full scope of their training to address these issues.

HB 127 will establish an Advanced Practice Permit for Alaska-licensed dental hygienists while maintaining the collaborative agreement between licensed dentists and dental hygienists. Dental hygienists are skilled, licensed oral health care professionals who focus on preventing and treating oral diseases. HB 127 will 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 in nursing homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

The creation of Advanced Practice Permits will increase access to oral care for individuals who need care but are not able to visit a dental office because of illness or disability. It would also offer new consumer choices for preventive treatments and services and increase education regarding the basics of dental hygiene and the connection between oral health and overall health. Additionally, licensed dental hygienists will identify more acute dental issues early on and provide referrals for patients needing restorative treatment.

HB 127 removes barriers to dental care 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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