



February 23, 2021

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 3  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

**Re: Support for HB 111 –Advanced Practice Permits For Dental Hygienists**

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Dental Hygienists' Association (Alaska DHA), the professional organization representing registered dental hygienists in the state, to express our strong support for HB111. This legislation would make great improvements in access to oral health care by establishing an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists.

HB111 would allow dental hygienists who have practiced under supervision of a dentist for a minimum of 4,000 hours to practice under an advanced practice permit and eliminate the requirement for a collaborative agreement. The advanced practice permit will improve the public's access to oral health care providers.

Alaska DHA is aware that dental diseases disproportionately affect our state's most vulnerable populations. There is unmet need for oral health services in Alaska. *The Alaska Oral Health Plan (2012-2016)* reports high caries rates in elementary students as high as 62%. Children with special health care needs are at an even higher risk for caries and barriers to routine access to dental care. The American Dental Association's *Alaska's Oral Health and Well-Being Report (2015)*, indicates low income individuals do not obtain oral health care due to: cost (63%), afraid of dental work (25%), inconvenient location (38%), and trouble finding a provider (22%). Additional statistics report, one in three adults avoid smiling and one and three experience anxiety due to the condition of their mouth and teeth.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) selected oral health as high priority within the *Healthy People 2020* initiatives, as growing evidence associates oral diseases, specifically periodontal disease, to several other systemic disorders including diabetes mellitus, pneumonia, heart disease, and stroke. In pregnant women, periodontal disease has been associated with low birth weight and preterm births. A significant determinant of oral health is the ability to access oral health care. The USDHHS calls for efforts to be made to overcome barriers to access oral health care.



Registered dental hygienists (RDHs) are licensed professionals that are valued members of the health care workforce. RDHs receive their training through universities and colleges that are accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). RDHs are highly educated and trained to deliver oral health care prevention services to the public, safely and effectively. Our national association, the American Dental Hygienists' Association, affirms dental hygienists are competent to provide dental hygiene services without supervision.

Eliminating the requirement for collaborative agreements is further supported by a recent report released by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Treasury and Labor, in consultation with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and White House offices. The report recommends, "States should consider eliminating requirements for rigid collaborative practice and supervision agreements between physicians and dentists and their care extenders (e.g., physician assistants, hygienists) that are not justified by legitimate health and safety concerns."<sup>1</sup>

Alaska DHA supports HB111, which would allow dental hygienists with 4,000 clinical hours the ability to practice to the full extent of their professional education and training. Dental hygienists with advanced practice permits have the potential to expand access to care, promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages of our Alaskan population.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
1F1F92F8C324457...

Katrina Virgin, RDH, MS  
President, Alaska Dental Hygienists' Association  
P.O. Box 240247  
Anchorage, AK 99524  
Kvirgin.ak.rdh@gmail.com

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). Reforming America's Healthcare System Through Choice and Competition. Retrieved from: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/Reforming-Americas-Healthcare-System-Through-Choice-and-Competition.pdf>



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Chicago, IL 60611  
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[www.adha.org](http://www.adha.org)

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 3  
Juneau, AK 99801

*Sent via email:*

[Representative.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov)  
[pakak.boerner@akleg.gov](mailto:pakak.boerner@akleg.gov)

Re: Support for HB 111 – Advance practice permits for dental hygienists

Dear Representative Spohnholz:

On behalf of the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA), the largest national organization representing the professional interests of dental hygienists across the country, I am writing to share our support for HB 111. Thank you for carrying this bill and for your leadership to improve oral health access in the State of Alaska.

ADHA works to ensure access to quality oral health care and promote the highest standards of dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research. Our association affirms that dental hygienists are competent to provide dental hygiene services without supervision<sup>i</sup>. As you are aware, the path to licensure for dental hygienist includes graduation from a Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) program. Specifically, CODA accreditation requires graduates be competent to perform procedures within a licensee's scope of practice.

ADHA advocates that dental hygiene and/or dental practice acts be amended so that the services of dental hygienists can be fully utilized in all settings. Furthermore, ADHA supports oral health care workforce models that culminate in graduation from an accredited institution; professional licensure; and direct access to patient care. ADHA defines direct access as the ability of a dental hygienist to initiate treatment based on their assessment of a patient's needs without the specific authorization of a dentist, treat the patient without the presence of a dentist, and maintain a provider-patient relationship.<sup>ii</sup>

In 1995, five states allowed direct access. Currently, 42 states, including Alaska, have policies that allow dental hygienists to work in community-based settings to provide preventive oral health services without the presence or direct supervision of a dentist. Allowing dental hygienists to practice under an advanced practice permit will further improve upon Alaska's direct access and provide additional opportunities for the safe and effective care provided by dental hygienists in order to reach patients in need.

The policies cited above are further supported by research demonstrating the impact dental hygienists have on access to care and public policy recommendations supporting dental hygienists providing care in direct access settings, including:

- In December 2018, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Treasury, and Labor in collaboration with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and White House offices, made policy recommendations on state and federal policies to improve choice and competition in the health care markets. The report says dental hygienists can safely and effectively provide some services offered by dentists, as well as complementary services. It goes on to recommend states should consider changes to their scope-of-practice statutes to allow all healthcare providers to practice to the top of their license, utilizing their full skill set. It also recommends that States eliminate requirements for rigid collaborative practice and supervision agreements between dentists and hygienists that are not justified by legitimate health and safety concerns.<sup>iii</sup>
- The National Governor’s Association specifically says, “the rationale that state dental boards most commonly used for restricting hygienists from practicing in unsupervised settings focuses on concerns about quality and safety, even though no clear evidence exists to support such restrictions.”<sup>iv</sup>
- The FTC previously wrote to the Georgia Board of Dentistry regarding regulation of dental hygiene supervision. In the letter, FTC staff stated “sound competition policy calls for competition to be restricted only when necessary to protect the public from significant harm. Here, we are aware of no evidence of past or future harm from current practices.”<sup>v</sup>
- The Oral Health Workforce Research Center concluded in 2016 that “Scopes of practice which allow dental hygienists to provide services to patients in public health settings without burdensome supervision or prescriptive requirements appear to increase access to educational and preventive care.”<sup>vi</sup>

Dental hygienists are skilled and competent oral health professionals. Allowing dental hygienists to practice under advanced practice permits is an important step to improve oral health access in Alaska. ADHA is pleased to join the Alaska Dental Hygienists’ Association, the Alaska Dental Society, the Alaska Board of Dental Examiners, and others in supporting the establishment of an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ann Lynch, ADHA Director of Advocacy and Education, at 312-440-8942 or AnnL@adha.net.

Sincerely,

*Lisa J. Moravec RDH, MSDH*

Lisa Moravec, RDH, MSDH  
President

cc: Lori E. Reetz, RDH, Alaska Dental Hygienists’ Association President  
Lisa Bryant, EFRDH, BSDH, Alaska Dental Hygienists’ Association Legislative Committee Co-Chair  
Royann Royer, RDH, Alaska Dental Hygienists’ Association Legislative Committee Co-Chair  
Yuri Morgan, Alaska Dental Hygienists’ Association Lobbyist  
Jennifer Frame, RDH, BSDH, ADHA District XII Trustee  
Ann Battrell, MSDH, ADHA Chief Executive Officer  
Ann Lynch, ADHA Director of Advocacy and Education

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<sup>i</sup> American Dental Hygienists’ Association. (2019). *Policy Manual*. Retrieved from: [https://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614\\_Policy\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). *Reforming America’s Healthcare System Through Choice and Competition*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/Reforming-Americas-Healthcare-System-Through-Choice-and-Competition.pdf>

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<sup>iv</sup> National Governors Association. (2014) *The Role of Dental Hygienists in Providing Access to Oral Health Care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/1401DentalHealthCare.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Federal Trade Commission Staff Comment to Georgia Board of Dentistry. 30 Dec 2010. Retrieved from [https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy\\_documents/ftc-staff-comment-georgia-board-dentistry-concerning-proposed-amendments-board-rule-150.5-0.3-governing-supervision-dental-hygienists/101230gaboarddentistryletter.pdf](https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/advocacy_documents/ftc-staff-comment-georgia-board-dentistry-concerning-proposed-amendments-board-rule-150.5-0.3-governing-supervision-dental-hygienists/101230gaboarddentistryletter.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup> Oral Health Workforce Research Center. (2016). *Development of a Dental Hygiene Professional Practice Index by State*, 2016 [Health Workforce Policy Brief]. Retrieved from [http://www.oralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SOP\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_2016.pdf](http://www.oralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SOP_Policy_Brief_2016.pdf).

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 406  
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Letter of support for HB 111 providing for an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists

Dear Representative Spohnholz:

This letter is to express my support for the provisions in HB 111 for an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists. The bill notes this permit is for experienced dental hygienists with the minimum of 4,000 documented hours of clinical service. In my time as dental officer in the Alaska Division of Public Health, I was aware this approach had been used in a number of states to address dental access issues with dental underserved populations (e.g., children with special health care needs and adults in long-term care settings) or underserved settings (e.g., schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families).

This practice model has been useful in development of school sealant programs in other states – programs that go into schools with fifty percent or more of children eligible for the free and reduced school lunch program to seal permanent molars. Molars are the permanent teeth most likely to experience dental decay. School sealant programs are an evidence-based dental practice and using the approach with dental hygienists is a cost-effective way to implement these programs. Use of dental hygienists under advanced practice permits could have lowered costs for dental screenings to assess dental decay rates and dental sealant utilization in Alaskan elementary school children – projects funded by the Oral Health Program (last done in the 2010/2011 school year).

Adults in long-term care settings are at increased risk of dental decay both due to functional ability to maintain dental hygiene and medications or cancer treatment that can result in “dry mouth.” Older adults in long term care settings that have active dental decay are at higher risk for aspiration pneumonia. Dental pain in adults that are no longer verbal can express in behavioral problems. Periodontal disease may exacerbate chronic disease conditions including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Yet these adults have little access to dental care. Having dental hygienists go into long-term care settings to clean teeth, apply fluoride varnish, use of a caries-arresting agent (silver diamine fluoride) can assist maintaining oral health of older adults who otherwise may not have access to dental care. In doing this the dental hygienists can triage those that need to get dental services for emergent conditions (e.g., dental abscess).

This practice model may also assist Alaska’s smaller community health centers. Some of Alaska’s dental health centers are staffed with one dentist. In circumstances where the dentist leaves the dental hygienist is faced with stopping work. One of the Alaska health centers faced this situation and ultimately lost the dental hygienist. When the health center got a new dentist, staff had to start completely over with recruitment to get a dental hygienist to practice in this more remote location.

Other states, including California and Oregon, have found this dental hygienist approach a cost-effective means to address dental access for underserved populations. Thank you for introducing this bill - I support passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Brad Whistler, DMD  
P.O. Box 32936  
Juneau, AK 99803



**Bristol Bay Area  
Health Corporation**  
6000 Kanakanak Road  
P.O. Box 130  
Dillingham, AK 99576  
(907) 842-5201  
(800) 478-5201  
FAX (907) 842-9354  
[www.bbahc.org](http://www.bbahc.org)

*Bristol Bay Area  
Health Corporation is  
a tribal organization  
representing 28 villages in  
Southwest Alaska:*

Aleknagik  
Chignik Bay  
Chignik Lagoon  
Chignik Lake  
Clark's Point  
Dillingham  
Egegik  
Ekuk  
Ekwo  
Goodnews Bay  
Ivanof Bay  
Kanatak  
King Salmon  
Knugank  
Koliganek  
Levelock  
Manokotak  
Naknek  
New Stuyahok  
Perryville  
Pilot Point  
Platinum  
Port Heiden  
Portage Creek  
South Naknek  
Togiak  
Twin Hills  
Ugashik

*Our Mission: We  
provide quality  
health care with  
competence,  
compassion, and  
sensitivity.*

March 19, 2021

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capitol Room 406  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 111 to provide for Dental Hygienist Advance Practice Permits

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

The Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC) is writing in support of House Bill 111, which will allow qualified dental hygienist to practice certain services independently with an advanced practice permit. The policies contained in the legislation, if enacted into law, will help to establish and broaden offered dental services in a wide swath of geographically and demographically underserved areas of Alaska.

BBAHC is a consortium of 28 Alaska Native Tribes in Southwestern Alaska. The corporation oversees 21 village-based clinics and operates the Kanakanak Hospital, a Critical Access Hospital accredited by The Joint Commission. The dental department encompasses the entire ground level floor of the H. Sally Smith Building located on the BBAHC campus. There are 13 off-site operatories located in 13 villages. The department provides a full range of dental services and performs field trips to most villages in the BBAHC service area. Because of the tremendous demand for dental services and the limited resources, a priority of treatment for dental services has been adopted.

House Bill 111 allows dental hygienists who meet certain requirements to perform work independently, up to the scope of their training, by obtaining an advanced practice permit. Hygienists will still be required to keep appropriate patient records, correctly supervise dental assistants and be subject to enacted regulations and statutes.

Dental care throughout the state, but especially in rural areas often served by Tribal health organizations, is far too scarce. With the passage of this legislation, dental health providers will be able to provide broader care in larger areas of that state. This will hopefully lead to better oral health outcomes over the coming years for all Alaskans.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide support for House Bill 111, and should you have any comments or questions regarding the dental care, or other health services we provide, please contact me via email at [rclark@bbahc.org](mailto:rclark@bbahc.org) or by telephone at 907.842.5201.

Sincerely,

**BRISTOL BAY AREA HEALTH CORPORATION**

  
Robert J. Clark  
President and Chief Executive Officer



James R Arneson DDS, Inc.

3092 Spruce Cape Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615

907-486-3403

[jarneson@gmail.com](mailto:jarneson@gmail.com)

March 17, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

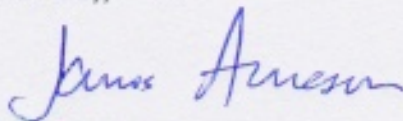
I have become aware of HB111 which adds an advanced practice permit classification for the experienced licensed dental hygienist in Alaska. As a dentist interested in public health I see opportunities for increased access to care with this bill.

The advanced practice permit licensee would need to maintain the high standards required of the dental profession. HB111 must have public safety and patient access to care as central themes in final form.

There are individuals with physical or mental barriers to the typical dental office setting. Residents of long term care facilities, disabled individuals and some in the geriatric community could benefit. Another advantage for challenged patients would be greater chances for referral to a dentist when remarkable issues are observed by the advanced hygiene provider.

As a practicing dentist I support the advanced practice permit for qualified Alaska licensed dental hygienists.

Respectfully,



James Arneson, DDS  
Kodiak, Alaska



The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
State Capitol  
120 4th Street, Rm 3  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for HB 111- Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

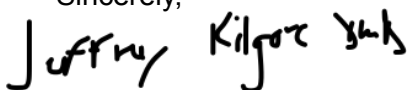
This letter is to express my support for HB 111 for an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists. As a former dental director of a federally qualified health center (FQHC) I have seen the devastating effects that dental disease (caries, periodontal issues, tooth loss, etc) has on the underserved population (e.g., children with special needs or our geriatric population in long term care facilities).

Caries and periodontal disease are common problems found in the special need population (disabled adults, children, etc) and adults in long-term care settings. There simply is not enough access to serve these at risk populations. HB 111 would allow a dental hygienist to go to these facilities to perform cleanings, apply and/or prescribe fluoride, or use silver diamine fluoride to arrest caries. The treatment provided would not only have a positive impact on dental health but also on overall health. Better health results in lower health care costs overall so HB 111 can be a feasible cost effective option.

Access to care unfortunately is a national problem but even worse in Alaska due to the vastness of our state. HB 111 would help address the access to care issue by allowing a hygienist to see and treat the at risk populations. Many states have adopted direct access by allowing dental hygienists to practice in alternative settings.

Thank you for your time and interest in HB 111, I support passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey Kilgore DMD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeffrey Kilgore, DMD



March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
State Capitol, Room 3  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for HB 111 – Advance practice permits for dental hygienists

Dear Representative Ivy Spohnholz,

As Legislative Co-Chair of the Alaska Dental Hygienists' Association (AKDHA), I commend you for your hard work and support to help improve access to oral healthcare for all Alaskans in need. The Alaska DHA fully supports the creation of an Advanced Practice Permit that would allow licensed dental hygienists with a minimum of 4,000 hours of clinical experience under the supervision of a dentist, prior to application, to provide much needed care in a wide range of alternative practice settings.

There is an ongoing legislative movement across the nation to utilize highly educated and skilled dental professionals to help improve access to oral healthcare to our country's most underserved populations. The Alaska DHA is advocating for the utilization of Registered Dental Hygienists as Advanced Practice (RDHAP) Oral Healthcare Specialists due to our extensive training, advanced degrees, and commitment to public safety, health, and wellness.

An example of legislative movement is the Action for Dental Health Act, signed into law on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 by former President Donald Trump, which allows organizations to qualify for oral health grants to support activities that improve oral health education and dental disease prevention as well as improve access to oral healthcare. Dental hygienists with an Advanced Practice permit would be well suited to develop and expand outreach programs that facilitate establishing dental homes for children and adults, including the elderly, blind and disabled. In addition, Registered Dental Hygienists with an Advanced Practice permit would have a wider range of alternative practice settings available to them such as nursing homes, Department of Corrections, as well as Women, infant, and Child Centers, for example, which would increase access to oral healthcare to those in need thereby reducing overall healthcare costs and reducing the need for emergency dental treatment. Even the former 2018 ADA President, Jeffrey M. Cole, stated, "The Action for Dental Health initiative shows what our profession stands for, which is that all Americans deserve good dental health. The ADA is pleased to see Congress prioritizing legislation that will improve access to oral health care and help prevention and outreach programs to combat dental disease before it starts" (<https://www.wsda.org/news/blog/2018/12/12/action-for-dental-health-act-is-now-law>).

The Alaska DHA is honored to support your work as a trailblazer and advocate for public health and wellness of all Alaskans through utilizing highly trained and educated Registered Dental Hygienists to help "combat dental disease before it starts," improve oral health through education and prevention, and increase access to oral healthcare to those who need it the most by supporting HB 111.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lisa Bryant'.

Lisa Bryant, RDH, BSDH  
Legislative Co-Chair Alaska DHA

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 3  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB111- Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

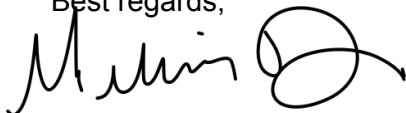
Representative Spohnholz,

My name is Melissa Davis. I am a registered dental hygienist in Fairbanks and worked at a FQHC for 10 years. Working in community dental health spotlights the lack of care many families are subjected to. Dental disease is rampant in our communities. I am writing in support of HB111. HB111 will benefit the state of Alaska greatly by increasing dental access to care. This Bill has the ability to provide preventative dental care to a broad spectrum of Alaskans. Starting with expecting mothers, research indicates basic oral homecare and preventative dental services may prevent preterm, low birth weight babies. From there on, we as dental hygienists educate mother and child on proper homecare, dietary concerns and disease prevention. As life progresses and we age new obstacles arise. We retire and lose our employer sponsored insurance. Preventative dental services often get tossed aside once living on a fixed income. Overall systemic health declines and we increase our medications causing adverse dental effects. Lack of oral hygiene increases causing more systemic health related issues and the cycle continues. Tooth loss, poor nutrition, weight loss, chronic pain and risk of aspiration pneumonia rises. Unfortunately this is the common path of many older Alaskans living in long term care facilities. HB111 will allow licensed dental hygienists with an Advanced Practice Permit to bring their education and services directly to the patient, decreasing the oftentimes large barrier of transportation.

I feel passionate HB111 will help increase access to Alaskans. Allowing licensed dental hygienists to work at the full potential of their education in our communities is imperative. Alaska overall has less dental providers, no dental schools, and a single dental hygiene program. We also have high rates of dental disease at high cost of treatment. This equation is costly to our communities.

Many states have adopted direct access, allowing dental hygienists to work outside of the traditional dental office setting. These states recognize that dental hygienists are primary care providers who are a liaison for oral systemic health.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Davis', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Melissa Davis RDH

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 3  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

**Re: Support for HB 111 –Advanced Practice Permits For Dental Hygienists**



Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

I am a Dental Hygienist writing in support of HB 111. I have been in Alaska for 35 years and worked in clinical practice, public health and as an educator. Collaborative Practice in Alaska, which I currently practice under at a long-term care facility, allows a hygienist to practice independently under the general supervision of a dentist. HB 111 -Advanced Practice Permit will expand access to dental care by allowing hygienists to work independently without having to obtain a collaborative practice agreement with a dentist to provide services, be able to bill for services provided, and refer to a dentist when needed.

Collaborative practice has improved access to care. However, many hygienists who want to work in underserved areas cannot find a Dentist who will work in a collaborative agreement. New ways of bringing oral health care to underserved populations are needed and the reason I am seeking your support and approval for HB 111- Advanced Practice permit.

HB 111 seeks to improve access to care by allowing a licensed dental hygienist, who holds an Advanced Practice Permit, to provide services to a patient who is unable to receive dental treatment because of age, infirmity, or disability without the physical presence, authorization, or supervision of a licensed dentist. HB 111 would allow dental hygienists to provide care to populations with special needs: children and adolescents, medically compromised individuals, the geriatric population and populations in underserved areas of Alaska. Licensed dental hygienists with an Advanced Practice Permit would still provide treatment as a member of a comprehensive oral health care team. This legislation would also allow an opportunity to revise efficiency and cost-saving methods to assist the underserved populations.

Please feel free to contact me personally if you would like more information or have any questions. HB 111 will improve access to the underserved thereby improving oral health, which has been shown to enhance overall health and well-being. Thank you for sponsoring HB 111.

Sincerely,

*Royann Royer RDH*

Royann Royer CDA RDH MPH  
Director Healthy Smiles Forever  
Cell phone: 907 227-8157



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of  
Commerce, Community and  
Economic Development**

DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS  
AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING  
Board of Dental Examiners

PO Box 110806  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0806  
Main: 907.465.22501  
Fax: 907.465.2974

March 17, 2021

RE: House Bill No. 111  
“An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene and advanced practice permits”

To Whom it May Concern,

At our last publicly noticed Alaska Board of Dental Examiners meeting held on March 15, 2021, we reviewed HB 111 which has been introduced during this thirty-second legislature by Representatives Spohnholz and Kreiss-Tomkins. The language in HB 111 appears identical to the committee substitute versions of SB 68 and HB 127 the Board supported during the previous legislature. Therefore, the Board supports HB 111 in its current form as of the date of this letter. We will attempt to have a member of the Board available during committee hearings for questions when able depending on scheduling

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Nielson".

David Nielson, DDS  
President, Alaska Board of Dental Examiners





# Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

☎ 307.562.6006 ☎ 907.563.2001 • 4000 Ambassador Drive, Suite 101 • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • [www.anhb.org](http://www.anhb.org)

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PRIBILOF  
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

ARCTIC SLOPE  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL BAY AREA  
HEALTH CORPORATION

CHICKALOON VILLAGE  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

CHUGACHMIUT

COPPER RIVER  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN  
TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES

KARLUK IRA  
TRIBAL COUNCIL

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE

KETCHIKAN  
INDIAN COMMUNITY

KODIAK AREA  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

MANILAQ ASSOCIATION

METLAKATLA INDIAN  
COMMUNITY

MT. SANFORD  
TRIBAL CONSORTIUM

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF EKLUTNA

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF TYONEK

NINILCHIK  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

NORTON SOUND  
HEALTH CORPORATION

SELDOVIA VILLAGE TRIBE

SOUTHCENTRAL  
FOUNDATION

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

YAKUTAT TLINGIT TRIBE

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM  
HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capitol Room 406  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 111 to provide for Dental Hygienist Advance Practice Permits

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)<sup>1</sup> is writing in support of House Bill 111, which will allow qualified dental hygienist to practice certain services independently with an advanced practice permit. The policies contained in the legislation, if enacted into law, will help to establish and broaden offered dental services in a wide swath of geographically and demographically underserved areas of Alaska.

House Bill 111 allows dental hygienists who meet certain requirements to perform work independently, up to the scope of their training, by obtaining an advanced practice permit. Hygienists will still be required to keep appropriate patient records, correctly supervise dental assistants and be subject to enacted regulations and statutes.

Dental care throughout the state, but especially in rural areas often served by Tribal health organizations, is far too scarce. With the passage of this legislation, dental health providers will be able to provide broader care in larger areas of that state. This will hopefully lead to better oral health outcomes over the coming years for all Alaskans.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide support for House Bill 111, and should you have any comments or questions regarding the dental care, or other health services we provide, please contact ANHB at [anhb@anhb.org](mailto:anhb@anhb.org) or via telephone at (907) 562-6006.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jimmie, Tribally-Elected Leader of the Village of Minto  
Chairman  
Alaska Native Health Board

<sup>1</sup> ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the Alaska Tribal Health System, which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 tribes and over 177,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people throughout the state. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB helps Alaska's tribes and tribal programs achieve effective consultation and communication with state and federal agencies on matters of concern.

## Pakak Boerner

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**From:** Mary Cerney <marycerney@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 10, 2021 11:03 PM  
**To:** Pakak Boerner  
**Subject:** HB111

I would like to encourage your support of the bill which would address serious deficiencies in the access to dental health care in the state. I am a dental hygienist who has been practicing in Alaska for over 4 decades and have served in just about every leadership position in the Alaska State Dental Hygienists Association and two terms on the Board of Dental Examiners. The last few years in clinical private practice have shown a decided shift (downward ) in the number of patients who seek care as the dental insurance plans (which are not true insurance, just a copayment or reimbursement of costs which has been to the same level for the past four decades) have been discontinued or pared down. It is sad to say, but this is what actually drives many patient visits—just having the coverage. As a result our patients are having fewer preventive visits, and this is especially true of the young families (many of whom have no coverage) who are struggling financially and the elderly.

At a presentation from one of the pediatric physicians of the Tanana Clinic here in Fairbanks a few years ago, she stated that dental caries (cavities) was the second most prevalent childhood disease of children in Alaska. This disease is preventable and treatable! Dental hygienists' education and practice focuses on the prevention and on some modes of treatment of this disease, putting the dental hygienist as the foremost professional in early intervention and education. This bill would eliminate some barriers to access that are obstacles to care that is desperately needed by many, many Alaskans! The dental hygienists are here, and well equipped to reach out to patients who have, in many cases, needless dental pain-which can escalate to very serious health issues. An infection in the mouth (which includes both dental decay and periodontal disease) is an infection in the head, which with all of the blood vessels in the area, is rapidly a systemic problem—that is throughout the body. This is an urgent problem- it is time to make a step toward solution-one which I think will be multifaceted. This bill is well written and deserves the legislative support.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Cerney, RDH,BS

[1420 Ithaca Rd.](#)

[Fairbanks, AK 99709](#)



April 14, 2021

Representative Spohnholz  
State Capitol  
Room 406  
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Spohnholz:

The Alaska Dental Society supports HB111.

HB111 will allow dental hygienists to deliver hygienic services independently of dentists in underserved areas. Alaska, like all states, has chronic areas of underserved need and allowing hygienists to work independently will provide an additional mechanism to fill that need.

Currently across the state hygienists are restricted to working either directly with a dentist or through an overseeing mechanism known as a collaborative agreement. While these options are the preferred mechanism for delivering care in order to provide comprehensive dental treatment for patients this is not always possible and allowing qualified hygienists to deliver care independently allows patients to at least receive hygiene services.

Sincerely,

*David Logan, DDS*

David Logan, DDS  
Executive Director, Alaska Dental Society

Alaska Dental Society  
1407 W. 31<sup>st</sup> Ave, Ste 304, Anchorage, Alaska 99503  
907-563-3003



## Alaska Primary Care ASSOCIATION

March 12, 2021

Representatives Zack Fields and Ivy Spohnholz, Co-Chairs  
House Labor & Commerce Committee  
Alaska House of Representatives  
Alaska Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for House Bill 111 – Dental Hygienist Advance Practice Permits

Dear Committee Co-Chairs Fields and Spohnholz:

The Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) supports the operations and development of Alaska's 29 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs and Look Alikes). Alaska Health Centers voted to support health workforce development initiatives that introduce new provider types to the market and increase access to care in their 2021 Policy Priorities.

All of Alaska's Community Health Centers are required to provide oral health services as a component of the comprehensive medical, dental, behavioral, pharmacy and care coordination services they offer. Dental services and overall oral health are vital components in the whole person care that Community Health Centers provide their patients. Many Health Centers offer on-site dental services provided by staff or contracted dental health professionals. Other more rural and smaller sites rely on sending patients to larger hub health facilities or neighboring urban Health Centers for dental care. One frequently cited reason for the shortage of dental services is the lack of providers.

In 2019, almost one third of Alaska Health Centers' 113,000 patients received dental care at their Community Health Center through over 96,796 visits provided by 77 full-time equivalent dentists, hygienists, and dental therapists. Persistent shortages of providers at all levels in Community Health Center dental clinics result in providers not working at their highest level of licensure; creating inefficiencies, decreased provider satisfaction, and barriers to patient care. The addition of Advanced Hygienists to practices would add an additional valuable layer of staffing between dentists and other hygienists and dental therapists to provide comprehensive services and support integration with other Health Center services, including chronic disease management, and behavioral health/substance use disorder services.

Community Health Centers have been pioneers in the past in supporting and incorporating expansion of health professional provider types into their care settings. Community Health Centers are ready to embrace this new provider type as they continue to grow and expand the increasing need of integrated dental care in primary care settings.

We urge passage of House Bill 111.

Sincerely,

*Jon Zasada*

Jon Zasada  
Policy Integration Director