



May 11, 2025

Representative Zack Fields
State Capitol Room 24
Juneau AK, 99801
Phone: 907-465-2647
Email: Representative.Zack.Fields@akleg.gov

Dear Representative Fields,

I am writing in regard to House Bill 197 (HB 197), titled *"An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene; establishing an executive administrator position for the Board of Dental Examiners; and relating to the ownership of dental offices and clinics."*

HB 197 was introduced to the House of Representatives on April 16, 2025. After being introduced, it was referred to the House Labor & Commerce Committee and it was recently scheduled for a hearing on Friday, May 16th. I am President of the Alaska Dental Hygienists' Association (AKDHA), and I would like to share our view of HB 197 and offer an amendment for you to consider. We will also be sending this request to your Co-Chair, Representative Hall, and the sponsor of HB 197, Representative Tomaszewski. While we agree with a majority of the proposed statute changes, we do not agree with the proposed change to Sec 08.32.014(a)(1)(A).

I have attached the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) Educational Program Standard 2-1 for you to review. Please note the intent portion specifically says "dental hygiene curriculum is comprehensive in scope and depth and requires a minimum of two years of academic preparation." Ultimately, if the Board of Dental Examiners wants to clarify the statute, it should match the standard, not eliminate it. This sets clear guidelines for the Board of Dental Examiners (especially new examiners and board staff) and applicants applying for licensure, provides the public with assurance they are receiving quality oral healthcare from competent dental hygienists, and reinforces the educational foundation of our profession that has existed for decades. If the intent of HB197 is to recognize that accelerated programs are becoming more prevalent (for example: eighteen month associate degrees), the amendment we propose would address this while still maintaining a high standard that protects the Alaskan public.

Additionally, when reviewing HB 197, AKDHA recognized the need to update another section: Sec 08.32.014(a)(1)(C). Several dental hygiene regional examinations have merged over the last few years and a national examination has emerged that tests a significant number of dental hygiene graduates.

Information on that examination (CDCA/WREB/CITA) is included for you to review and you can access more information from their website—adextesting.org.

AKDHA would like to offer the following amendment to HB 197:

Section 1. AS 08.32.014 (a) is amended to read:

(a) An applicant for a license to practice dental hygiene shall

(1) provide evidence to the board that the applicant

(A) has successfully completed an academic program in dental hygiene [OF AT LEAST TWO YEARS DURATION THAT,] **with curriculum that includes at least two academic years of full-time instruction or its equivalent at the postsecondary college-level that,** at the time of graduation, is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association and is approved by the board;

(B) has passed a written theory examination of the American Dental Association Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations or an equivalent examination approved by the board;

(C) has successfully passed a state, [OR] regional, **or national** dental hygiene clinical examination approved by the board;

I would also like to express my frustration at trying to gather information about this bill from the Alaska Board of Dental Examiners (BoDE). The meeting minutes from December 13, 2024 and February 7, 2025 are not available because, according to board staff, they have not been approved by the board. Also, their last meeting on April 28th was cancelled since they did not have a quorum and their next meeting date has not been scheduled or made public. Our AKDHA legislative team was thankful Representative Tomaszewski's office had some information to share—a Legislative Sponsorship Request dated February 2025. The lack of information available to the public from the BoDE is concerning and the Legislative Sponsorship Request has DRAFT written across the first page, which we found unusual.

I hope this letter highlights our position and provides an amendment that you will consider presenting at your May 16th committee hearing. If you would like to discuss the proposed amendment to HB 197 further, please reach out to the AKDHA Legislative Chair, Royann Royer by emailing rroyer@mtaonline.net or calling (907) 227-8157.

Sincerely,



Lisa Wells, RDH

AKDHA President

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