

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol
120 4th Street, Rm. 3
Juneau, AK 99801
Representative.ivy.spohnholz@akleg.gov
CC: Bernice.nesbitt@akleg.gov

Re: HB127- Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

Representative Spohnholz,

My name is Melissa Davis. I am a registered dental hygienist in Fairbanks and have worked at a FQHC for 10 years. Working in community dental health spotlights the lack of care many Alaskans feel. Dental disease rampant in our communities. I am writing in support of HB 127. HB127 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. HB127 will allow license 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 HB127 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,

Melissa Davis RDH