



Representative Ivy Spohnholz

House Ways and Means Committee Chair

House Labor & Commerce Committee Co-Chair

Serving House District 16: College Gate, Russian Jack, Nunaka Valley, & Reflection Lake

MEMORANDIUM

To: House Labor & Commerce Committee
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Representative Kaufman
Representative McCarty
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From: Representative Ivy Spohnholz

Date: March 31st, 2021

Re: Additional follow-up information relating to HB111; creating an Advanced Practice Permit for Dental Hygienists

What are the requirements for the 4,000 hours of documented clinical experience?

Hours of documented clinical experience are fulfilled when the dental hygienist spends time working in the clinic with patients. This includes but is not limited to disinfecting and preparing a room for a patient, processing x-rays, providing periodontal treatment, and any other work they do for patients in the clinic working with a licensed dentist.

How is an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists similar to the licensure for an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, (APRN)?

APRNs must first be licensed as a Registered Nurse, (RN), before their APRN license can be renewed. Similarly, as provided in HB111, licensed dental hygienists with Advanced Practice Permits cannot renew this permit without first holding an active dental hygienist license.

How is an advanced practice permit for dental hygienists similar to the licensure for a Physician's Assistant, (PA)?

Physicians Assistants can practice in a Doctor's office or semi-independently if they have a collaborative agreement with a doctor. Dental hygienists already have the ability to practice semi-independently with a direct care agreement with a dentist. HB111 would allow dental hygienists with an advanced practice permit to practice without direct supervision of a dentist if a dental hygienist has 4,000 hours of clinical experience and are approved by the Board of Dental Examiners.

How many Alaskans lack access to dental care?

Comprehensive data on this topic is not available, however, according to the Health Resources and Service Administration, there are 298 clinics in Alaska that qualify as dental shortage areas, including clinics in correctional facilities. There are 13 geographic clinics with shortages, three correctional facilities with shortages, 28 federally qualified clinics with shortages, one Medicaid eligible shortage area, and the remaining areas are Indian Health Service providers.¹

How many children in Alaska lack access to dental care?

In 2017 12,785 Alaskan children lived below the poverty line. 62% of Alaskans earning less than \$20,000 a year spend more than half their income on rent. Many relying on Medicaid for health coverage.² As of February 2021, 44% of Alaska Medicaid enrollees are children. Of the 240,776 enrollees in Alaska, 98,660 are 18 or younger.³

Does the Advanced Practice Permit as proposed in HB111 provide for maintenance and safety requirements of the use of radiological equipment?

The regulation of maintenance and safe use of radiological equipment is not directly referenced in the legislation; however, this is currently provided by the Board of Dental Examiners under AS 08.36.075. The board is responsible for establishing and enforcing standards for dental radiological equipment, and these regulations will apply to dental hygienists holding an advanced practice permit.

¹ <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find>

² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/586370ceec534a5dbdedba846/t/5c0e0535032be4548e78dd34/1544422713259/Alaska-ranks-36th.pdf>

³ <http://dhss.alaska.gov/healthyalaska/pages/dashboard.aspx>