



**SENATOR PEGGY
LEHNER**
6th Ohio Senate District

SENATOR CECIL THOMAS
9th Ohio Senate District

Memorandum:

TO: All Senators
FR: Senator Peggy Lehner and Senator Cecil Thomas
RE: Co-Sponsor Request: Dental Therapist Licensure Bill
DT: March 3, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Senator Thomas and I will soon be reintroducing legislation that would allow for the creation of a new level of dental care provider in Ohio, known as a dental therapist. A dental therapist is somewhat analogous to a physician's assistant in medicine. They work under the supervision of a dentist and are specifically trained to provide preventive care in the form of dental health education, evaluations, fluoride treatment, simple fillings, and non-surgical extractions. In Alaska and Minnesota where dental therapists have been licensed for a number of years, they are primarily used to provide basic dental care to those in dental health shortage areas. The number of dental health shortage areas in Ohio continues to grow (currently 88) and dental therapy could bring significant relief to these communities.

Fifty-four other nations utilize dental therapists. In 2012, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation reviewed 1,100 studies of such programs and concluded that "... the quality of the technical care provided by dental therapists (within the scope of their practice) was comparable to that of a dentist and in some studies was judged superior."

I recently attended a presentation in Dayton sponsored by Premier Health Care network featuring Dr. Don Berwick, former Director of CMS and president emeritus of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. In conversation following his presentation, Dr. Berwick spontaneously brought up dental therapy as being one of the "most important and significant health care reforms" that this country should take up.

Obviously, as with any reform the concept has its supporters and detractors. It is time however for Ohio to have rigorous debate over this concept. If we are going to effectively address rising healthcare costs and equitable access to care we need to be bold.

We would greatly appreciate your support in co-sponsoring this legislation. If you are interested, please confirm with Kate Brickner, kate.brickner@ohiosenate.gov by the end of business on March 10, 2017.