

ODONTIA Winter 2015 -2016

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By the time you read this the holiday season will likely be over and we'll be gearing up for the Primary Election season! The Primary Election Day is March 15, 2016; be sure to update your voter registration and vote. At the end of this year, the 131st General Assembly will be halfway completed and ODHA may be at the beginning of working on one of the biggest issues it has ever undertaken.

It has been a busy season leading up to this report. ODHA is supporting Senate Bill 33 a bill, with changes, that would require cultural competency for certain licensees and graduating professionals entering the profession. Senate Bill 33 is sponsored by Senator Charleta Tavares (D-Columbus). At the present time the Association is considered an interested party as the profession is not technically addressed in the bill; however, our regulatory board falls under the regulatory structure of Senate Bill 33 and ODHA would like to be added to the bill. Our position would move to proponent if a simple amendment is added to include dental hygienists.

The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association supports the efforts behind the bill and is actually in the process of meeting the requirements in the bill. The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) has included cultural competency in its manual of current accreditation standards for dental hygiene education programs.

Additionally, our national partner organization, the American Dental Hygienists' Association, has recently issued a white paper on the future of dental hygiene education and practice. The paper entitled, "*Transforming Dental Hygiene Education and the profession for the 21st Century*" states,

“A myriad of societal factors and new research support the need for dental hygiene's growth and expansion. Demographic trends indicate that the U.S. population is changing, with an increase in underserved patients and demographic groups that are underrepresented in both patient and practitioner populations. Many of the underserved populations will present with complex health care needs including complications that far exceed oral concerns. **Behavioral, financial, cultural and medical issues will have to be addressed, as they often cannot be separated from oral health needs. All of these trends will be instrumental in**

defining future dental hygiene roles, as meeting societal needs will require oral health care providers from more backgrounds, in more roles, and in more settings than just the traditional private practice dental office (emphasis added).” (p. 8)

We believe that we will be able to meet the initial licensure requirement and the continuing education requirement can be accomplished and actually is a positive development for our profession as we look to better serve the unmet needs of people in our community. We will continue to monitor this legislation and to seek our amendment.

The Ohio Dental Hygienists Loan Repayment Program will begin soon. This program was requested in HB 463 last session by ODHA and is funded completely by RDH licensure fees. The initial step that we took was to place a \$10 fee on every license, starting with the December 2015 registration period. With just over 8,000 licensees, the loan repayment program will have about \$80,000 to award to RDHs who seek application to the program. The rules are being developed now and I anticipate that awards may be made in 2016.

Additionally, ODHA Immediate Past President Amy Kinnamon presented testimony before the House Healthcare Efficiencies Study Committee at a field hearing in Cincinnati in September. Testifying in tandem with David Maywhoor of the Dental Action Now project on the need for mid-level providers and the projected overabundance and underemployment of dental hygienists in the future. Amy did a wonderful job and her testimony has led to a desire to highlight various oral health issues in the final report of the study committee. Amy’s testimony sets the stage for the big project I mentioned at the beginning of the article.

This past summer ODHA voted to formally support the Dental Action Now (DAN) project that is coordinating the effort to establish a dental therapist mid-level provider model in Ohio. ODHA will be coordinating with DAN to pursue this overdue legislation. A bill is still in the drafting phase, but a sponsor has committed to pursuing this bill on our behalf. Senator Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) has agreed to put this bill forward and begin the dialogue on this important aspect of oral health access. This effort will not be easy and we anticipate strong resistance from the Ohio Dental Association. Every member will need to engage on this endeavor by talking to their legislators, spreading the word to non-members about the good work that is going on in the Association and helping to raise awareness with groups with which you may be involved, like church groups, civic organizations, non-profits, etc. The stakes will be very high to ensure that we are

successful in this effort. Stay tuned for updates and directions on how to make your voice known on this important issue.

ODHA is taking the opportunity to spread its message and testify on issues of importance and relevance to the profession. Our efforts at the Statehouse are complimented by your engagement with your State Representative and State Senator to share your position on the state of oral healthcare in Ohio and how to increase employment of dental hygienists in Ohio. Remember it is easier to ask something from someone that you already know! I look forward to seeing you all at the ODHA Capital Day on March 16, 2016. Details are available on the ODHA website.