



Please Support A.5632, which Adopts the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact

Assembly Budget Committee Hearing

June 27, 2023

Good afternoon, Madame Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Jim Schulz, and I am the Director of Governmental and Public Affairs for the New Jersey Dental Association. On behalf of the more than 4,300 members of the NJDA, I am pleased to register our support for A.5632, sponsored by Assemblyman Herb Conaway, which adopts the Dentist and Dental Hygienists Compact in New Jersey. We believe the enactment of this legislation will help address our current dental workforce shortage and improve access to care, all while continuing to protect the public.

Workforce and licensure issues were focal points of the association prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic merely exposed and exacerbated this crisis. Dental practices in New Jersey, and throughout the country, have been experiencing severe workforce downturns as well as frustrations in their ability to recruit out-of-state personnel due to license processing times caused by out migrations of state employee workforce and antiquated computer systems.

The NJDA supports the licensure compact legislation to improve the freedom of movement for dentists and dental hygienists across state lines while eliminating the needless waiting periods and tangential hurdles many dentists and dental hygienists, and their practices, experience on a regular basis. Improving portability and eliminating needless waiting periods makes recruitment of quality dental professionals easier, which, in turn turbocharges practices efficiency and production. Having a robust dental workforce means more patients will be seen and there is better access to care. In the wake of the pandemic, many New Jerseyans have had their preventative dental care delayed because of these mounting shortages and chronic licensure complications. We believe that this legislation takes a big step forward to improve licensee mobility and office recruitment as well as facilitate improved access to needed oral health care. Moreover, it will help address one of the major relocating challenges for dentists and dental hygienists in our military and public health services, and their families.

The New Jersey State Board of Dentistry and other states' regulatory boards will benefit by providing agreement on uniform licensure requirements, a shared data system for access to primary source documentation of an applicant's credentials and tracking of adverse licensee actions. Increased cooperation among the various state dental boards, and immediate availability of information is critical to protecting the public and it will be enhanced without reducing the licensing board's primary mission – protecting the public.

Importantly, A.5632 will preserve and strengthen the current system of state licensure throughout the country. Dentists and dental hygienists utilizing the compact must abide by the laws and rules of the state in which they are practicing and adhere to that state's scope of practice, ensuring each member state's authority to regulate the profession.

Currently, Iowa, Washington, and Tennessee have enacted Compact laws. Additionally, five other states, including New Jersey, have introduced Compact legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of A.5632. I humbly ask for your support for this initiative.