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Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
House Bill 166 Proponent Testimony-State Dental Board
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Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the subcommittee, I am Chris Immormino, President of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA) and I am providing a proponent statement on behalf of my colleagues to support the budget of the Ohio State Dental Board.

As one of the two licensed members of the dental team in Ohio, a relationship with our licensure board is vitally important. The ODHA is proud to report that the Ohio State Dental Board is running in an efficient manner and its Director, Harry Kamdar, and the staff are responsive to the people they regulate. As was presented in prior testimony by the Board, licensure and registration fees were raised in the last budget. ODHA supported the increased licensure fees that had not been raised in over 15 years. The Board is implementing the use of the e-licensing system which has made renewing our licenses much smoother and without hassle.

The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association is working with the Board to implement key priorities that were discussed by Director Kamdar. ODHA is working with the Board and its various committees to draft rules that will require mandatory education of dentists and dental hygienists on opioids through annual continuing education classes to be completed during the two-year licensure period. Additionally, we share the goal of protecting older teens and young Ohioans on the dangers of tobacco product use and seek to continue work on prevention and early intervention strategies. Hygienists are educated and trained to perform tobacco cessation education, oral cancer screenings and nutritional counseling with our patients. We look forward to continued efforts to discuss with our patients the hazards of the use of e-cigarettes and other devices.

During the Director's testimony there was a question about the lack of dentists who accept Medicaid. Unfortunately, this has been a problem in Ohio for nearly two decades. While there are many reasons cited for the low rate of Medicaid patient acceptance including, low dentist reimbursement rates, administrative challenges with Medicaid, patient cancellations, and maldistribution of dentists in areas where Medicaid patients are located the fact is that other states are figuring out how to address these problems and are doing so successfully and with tangible financial Medicaid program results.

Other states are addressing the problems by enhancing reimbursements for practitioners (dentists and hygienists), deployment of workforce advancements like mid-level providers called dental hygiene therapists, allowance of direct Medicaid reimbursements to hygienists, coordination of non-emergency medical transportation for patients, and other innovative ideas. Ohio's solutions are before us; the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association is prepared to help implement the solutions. However, it all starts with the state decision makers who regulate the dental practice act and decide that Ohio must move forward.

The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association appreciates the relationship it has with the Ohio State Dental Board and supports the budget request that is before you. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding my testimony.