



**House Bill 96
Proponent Testimony
House Finance Committee
March 12, 2025**

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on House Bill 96, the main operating budget. My name is Kelly Kneale, I am the President of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA).

The mission of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association is to support dental hygienists through networking, inclusion, and development; to advocate for advancements to secure the profession of dental hygiene; and to promote public access to oral health care. Good oral health is essential for many reasons, but the mouth is the gateway to the body, and maintaining oral hygiene helps prevent cavities, gum disease, and infections which can lead to more serious health issues such as heart disease and the inability to control their diabetes.

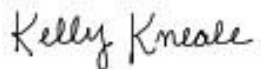
For these reasons, and many more, ODHA is proud to support HB 96 and the many dental services and programs that will be funded by this budget:

- **Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Dental Hygienist Loan Repayment Program** – \$100,000 in each fiscal year to repay all or part of the student loans taken by eligible individuals who agree to provide dental services in areas determined to have a dental health resource shortage. Dental services must be provided to Medicaid-eligible Ohioans regardless of the person's ability to pay for services. This program is funded by a surcharge on the dental hygienist registration fee (not General Revenue Funding).
- **Ohio Department of Health, Children's Dental Services** - \$3 million in each fiscal year to establish and administer screenings, treatment, and preventive oral health care for children residing underserved areas. These dental care services may be provided by deploying mobile dental units to schools in underserved areas. In administering the program, ODH is tasked with increasing children's access to dental care and helping to reduce the incidence of dental caries among children.
- **Ohio Department of Medicaid & Ohio Department of Health, Children's Access to Vision and Dental Services** – At the request of Medicaid, up to \$7 million may be transferred to ODH to support vision and dental programs for low-income children. Of the transferred funds, up to \$2 million in each fiscal year can be used to increase children's access to dental care.

- **Ohio Department of Health & Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, School-Based Health Centers** – Earmarks \$10,000,000 in each fiscal year to be used by ODH, in consultation with DEW, to support school-based health centers in high-need counties.
- **Ohio Department of Health, FQHC Primary Care Workforce Initiative** – Earmarks \$2.7 million in each fiscal year for the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers to administer the FQHC Primary Care Workforce Initiative. Requires the initiative to provide medical, dental, behavioral health, physician assistant, and advanced practice nursing students with clinical rotations through federally qualified health centers.
- **Ohio State Dental Board** – OSDB regulates nearly 41,000 dentists, dental hygienists, and related dental personnel throughout Ohio, and they are governed by 13 appointed members. As a regulatory agency, OSDB is supported by fees and receives no General Revenue Funding. The Board will be busy in the next two fiscal years implementing SB 40 (135th General Assembly) which entered Ohio into the Dentist and Dental Hygienist Compact. The Compact serves to facilitate the interstate practice of dentists and dental hygienists, as well as improve public access to oral health services. ODHA was a committed supporter of SB 40.

As dental hygienists, we understand the importance of good oral health throughout a person's life to promote overall health. The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association is especially encouraged to see children's oral health prioritized in this budget, the significance that the formative years have on a child's physical, mental, and oral health cannot be understated. Thank you for your time and attention on these important policies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Kneale".

Kelly Kneale, RDH
President
Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association