



Shannon Sweeney, RDH
House Bill 203 Interested Party Testimony with Concerns
House State & Local Government Committee
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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, my name is Shannon Sweeney and I am President of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA) and on behalf of the members of ODHA I am writing to express our position on House Bill 203. House Bill 203 seeks to allow license holders or holders of certification from other states to obtain a license or certification here in Ohio, including dentists, dental hygienists, and other auxiliary dental team members.

Our Legislative Committee has reviewed this bill and ODHA has decided to take the position of interested party with concerns. It is important to highlight that Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs) are the only degreed dental professionals aside from the dentist in the dental office. There are 13 community colleges or universities with dental hygiene programs in Ohio, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), an arm of the American Dental Association, accredits all programs. A list of schools is included at the end of my testimony.

RDHs are educated at a national standard, required by CODA, the same body that accredits dental schools, and they are tested through an examination accepted in Ohio and across the nation developed by the American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX). In fact, 49 states require graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and 47 states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and the U.S. Virgin Islands recognize passage of the ADEX exam as the standard to achieve licensure in their states.

Upon completion of the degree, passage of the ADEX exam, and granting of a state license, dental hygienists should be able to practice to the highest level of their training. The goals outlined by the sponsors and proponents of the bill are that the state wants to attract more licensees from other states to come to Ohio. Unfortunately, in Ohio, our problem is keeping highly trained dental hygienists in the state, as many Ohio-based RDHs leave to practice in other states with fewer supervision restrictions on the profession. For example, in Michigan, dentists entrust that their dental hygienists are ready to serve patients without restrictions when the dentist is not physically present in the dental office. Why would an out-of-state RDH come to Ohio just to be told he or she cannot practice to their full level of training?

As it relates to the language of the bill, we appreciate language proposed in ORC 4796 that would address concerns we raised last session. There are protections added in ORC 4796.08

that require a criminal background check to be provided upon application. We believe that this is fair and important for patient protection.

However, as it relates to criminal activity or a violation of the practice act by a licensee in another state, we are concerned that in ORC 4796.10 language would prohibit our regulatory board from issuing or denying a license until complaints, allegations or investigations of “unprofessional conduct or an alleged crime pending before a court, administrative agency or entity” is “resolved” in the other state. We question what does “resolved” mean? Does it mean that the licensee is on probation in that state? They cannot practice there, but Ohio welcomes him or her with open arms because the case was “resolved”? **We would argue that “resolved” needs to be better defined in the bill or that the General Assembly should give the regulatory boards the authority to determine what “resolved” means.**

It is important to point out that each state has its own practice act, which can differ from Ohio’s. We were further encouraged to see that in ORC 4796.08 there is an allowance for the regulatory boards to require an applicant to pass an examination of Ohio’s dental hygiene laws and rules. There are hygienists who practice in states like Maine and Colorado that have independent practices and would be shocked to learn they are hindered in their ability to practice or establish a business in Ohio, but they should know what our practice act holds.

While the protections identified above allowed us to take the position we are taking on the bill, the concern emerges as we read the Chapter 4715 provisions applying to the dental team. In proposed ORC 4715.27 (RDH credentialing):

(2) The board shall issue a license to practice as a dental hygienist in accordance with Chapter 4796. of the Revised Code to an applicant if either of the following applies:

(a) The applicant holds a license to practice as a dental hygienist in another state.

(b) The applicant has satisfactory work experience, a government certification, or a private certification as described in that chapter in the practice of a dental hygienist in a state that does not issue that license.

The protections of Section 4796 are included, but what is also added is the exception to allow someone who has not completed a nationally accredited dental hygiene program nor passed a national, standardized, accredited exam to come to Ohio and practice, relying on inconsistent training and experience. This is a major red flag for us as professionals and we hope that it should be for you as patients. All Ohioans deserve a safe and high standard of care. Since graduating from a CODA accredited program is required in 49 of the 50 states, including Ohio, and 47 states, including Ohio, recognize the ADEX exam, **we suggest the language in ORC 4715.27 be changed to delete (2)(b) and add language in (2)(a) that in addition to maintaining a license, a hygienist has also completed a dental hygiene program accredited by CODA and passed the ADEX exam or similar examination.**

(2) The board shall issue a license to practice as a dental hygienist in accordance with section 9.79 of the Revised Code to an applicant if either of the following applies:

(a) The applicant holds a license to practice as a dental hygienist in another state **has completed a dental hygiene program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, and has passed the American Board of Dental Examiners exam or similar examination.**

(b) ~~The applicant has satisfactory work experience, a government certification, or a private certification as described in that section in the practice of a dental hygienist in a state that does not issue that license.~~

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee dental hygienists are educated and have a college degree from CODA accredited dental hygiene schools. Through our training we are taught to be ardent advocates for our patients in terms of the care they receive and the appropriate access to that care, which is why we bring these concerns to you today. House Bill 203 poses opportunities, but they must be met with the proper amount of caution. ODHA appreciates the opportunity to speak to HB 203. We ask for thoughtful consideration of the suggestions we have made and look forward to working with the committee and the sponsors as this bill advances.

Dental Hygiene Programs in Ohio

**Columbus State Community College
Cuyahoga Community College
Lakeland Community College
James A. Rhodes State College
University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash
The Ohio State University
Owens State Community College
Shawnee State Community College
Sinclair Community College
Stark State College of Technology
Lorain County Community College
Youngstown State University**

Hocking Technical College (The DH clinic is located at the Perry Campus in New Lexington)