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Testimony on AB-489

Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor April 29, 2003

The Nevada Dental Hygienists' Association supports the passage of AB-489. This is legislation that will allow dental hygienists to become more accessible and accountable to the public.

The Nevada Dental Hygienists Association initially proposed this legislation to create a separate Board of Dental Hygiene that would allow the profession of dental hygiene to be self-regulating. Dental Hygienists want to have a greater involvement in the examination, licensure, discipline, practice and educational standards of their profession. We were approached by the State Board of Dental Examiners to reconsider the bill. The Dental Hygiene Association agreed that it was in the best interest of the public for us to find an alternate solution within the existing Board structure that would provide dental hygienists some amount of self-regulation. The Nevada State Board of Dental Examiners (SBDE) and the Nevada Dental Hygienists Association (NDHA) worked diligently in a positive and productive atmosphere to collaboratively create and support BDR-185/AB-489.

AB-489 proposes changes for licensure by credential for dental hygienists; this will allow dental hygienists to receive a license to practice in Nevada in a more timely fashion resulting in greater access to dental hygiene care for the public. The Dental Hygiene Association believes that a dental hygienist who has been dedicated to their profession, has actively practiced and refined their skills over the course of 5 years and meets all of the requirements of the application process should be recognized as having a level of competency that would be sufficient to pass the Nevada dental hygiene clinical licensure examination.

AB-489 proposes to add one dental hygienist member to the SBDE; this will provide the Board with further insight from the perspective of a prevention advocate. In an effort to allow dental hygienists to have a more vital role in the regulatory process both parties agreed to the appointment of an additional dental hygiene member to the SBDE. It was also agreed that a dental hygiene committee would be established to research and provide recommendations to the Board for the practice of dental hygiene. These changes have no fiscal impact to the state of Nevada since the SBDE is self-funded and amenable to the cost of an additional member.

As a part of the lengthy process and agreement to terms, each word was scrutinized to reflect the intent that would be most favorable to the public and provide boundaries for the professionals governed by NRS Chapter 631. The original BDR-185 and proposed amendment to the Assembly committee on Commerce and Labor asked for modifications to the terms "dental hygiene" and "dental hygienist". This language was supported by the SBDE and did not receive any opposing testimony in the Assembly Committee on Commerce and Labor hearing. Unfortunately, the proposed language could not be agreed upon with LCB due to parameters of legal formatting. Those terms are omitted from the

bill that is before you. Again the NDHA and the SBDE are willing to work together to place this language in the appropriate code or statute.

The outcome of the proposed legislation will create a substantial benefit to the citizens of Nevada by increasing the numbers of dental hygienists available to provide care; increasing and utilizing the number of public advocates that affect policy pertaining to dentistry and dental hygiene; and affording more organization and dispersion of duties on the governing board. Most importantly the Nevada State Board of Dental Examiners and the Dental Hygiene Association have demonstrated that the public's best interest is foremost in our commitment as oral health care professionals.

With Respect,



Caryn Solie, R.D.H.

Government Affairs Council- Nevada Dental Hygienists' Association