



May 5, 2021

Wisconsin Dental Examining Board-DSPS
1400 E Washington Avenue
PO Box 8366
Madison WI 53708-8366

Dear DEB Members,

On behalf of several health groups, we are writing to request the support of the Dental Examining Board to help ensure that Wisconsin has accurate and timely data on the short- and long-term trajectory of the dental workforce within each community. Oral health is integral to overall health and we need to ensure the dental workforce is able to continue providing the highest level of care to residents in all of Wisconsin's urban and rural communities.

Data shows that a well-trained and properly distributed healthcare workforce is essential to quality of life and economic stability. Therefore, we need to look ahead and project if our state will have the dentists and dental hygienists positioned to meet the needs of all our communities. One way to accomplish this would be to conduct workforce surveillance as part of dentist and dental hygienist license renewal, as is done in several states (including Minnesota and Ohio) and similar to the method used to survey Wisconsin nurses.

In 2018, a dentist workforce survey was implemented through DHS's Oral Health Program and funded by Delta Dental of Wisconsin. Considerable efforts were made by DHS and the Wisconsin Dental Association to promote this survey, but there were still tremendous gaps in response. While the survey had a 60% response rate, that also meant we didn't acquire information where 40% of the state's dentists were working, nor how long they anticipated to continue practicing.

The survey also took many months to complete and compile; by the time the data was released, it was already two years old. A short, concise workforce questionnaire with fewer than 15 questions (see attached) that is completed as part of license renewal will provide the accurate, complete, and timely data needed for workforce planning.

It is more important than ever for policy makers, private funders, and educators to understand, analyze, and respond to Wisconsin's critical dental workforce needs. Rural communities are already facing uncertainties with current and future dental professional retirements. We urge

you to direct the Department of Safety and Professional Services to explore viability of implementing an optional workforce survey as part of dental professional license renewal.

Thank you for your leadership during these challenging and unprecedented times. The Wisconsin Dental Association, Delta Dental of Wisconsin, and Marquette University, along with many major health organizations, want to work with DSPS and DEB to develop solutions to ensure all Wisconsinites can access the oral health they need to lead productive lives. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this initiative.

Sincerely,



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cc: Governor Tony Evers
Secretary, Department of Workforce Development

Attachment

Additional organizations supportive of this request include:

Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Dental Hygienists' Association
Wisconsin Free and Charitable Clinics
Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition
Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association