

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for the record my name is Sharity Ludwig and I am an Expanded Practice Dental Hygienist and Director of Community Dental Programs with Advantage Dental based in Redmond.

I'm testifying in support of House Bill 3353 because during my 14 years as a dental hygienist providing community based care in rural and frontier Oregon I've seen firsthand the problems encountered getting children access to screenings and thereby follow-up to appropriate oral health care.

According to the CDC, tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease and the number one reason kids miss school. In addition, Oregon is in the process of transforming health care where physical, behavioral and oral health are aligned. My question is, what is the opposition to having oral health screening be on passive consent when physical health and behavioral health screenings can be completed in this manner in the school setting? School based screenings provide the opportunity for early identification of oral health problems and reduces the amount of time that a student is out of class. As a trip to the dental office in some regions take kids out of class for an entire day.

Today if one of the school districts wants to do a dental screening on 100 third graders they must send out a written consent packet and hope the parents completed in its entirety. Typically, three quarters to one-half of the parents do not complete and send the consent for screening packets back. Unfortunately, the 50 - 75 kids whose parents do not send a consent back may also be the ones with the greatest need. The intent is to provide an option that allows schools to provide written notice while at the same time assuring parents that do not want their children to have a dental screen will have their wishes respected.

If the teacher or school nurse felt that an individual student needed a screening for some reason this bill would not change the current process. This bill changes the process for screenings when an entire class or school is to be screened.

Below you will see images of children screened in the community settings or served in our Advantage Dental clinics. These problems might have been prevented if early identification via screenings and coordination to assure appropriate care were completed.



Wasco County Child



A child from Umatilla County



Three children from Klamath County