

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2056

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

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Hearing Date: March 31, 2021 8:00 AM

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Beth Stewart, Executive Director

Texas Oral Health Coalition Inc

Midland, TX

On behalf of the Texas Oral Health Coalition, I am writing to request the House Public Health Committee vote in favor of teledentistry in Texas.

Teledentistry is a system of care underneath the umbrella of telehealth. As with other categories of telehealth, teledentistry leverages technology to improve access to care and information exchange between patients, dentists, dental specialists, and other health care professionals. Teledentistry is not a specific service and does not change the scope of practice or supervision laws - it enhances how dental practices provide care. It enables clinicians to communicate with patients to provide advice, consultation, and triage, and creates a complete record of images, forms, consent, payment, etc. It also provides an opportunity to share additional resources patients may need, such as links to food supports or housing assistance.

Teledentistry allows for follow up communication with patients following emergency and non-emergency treatment as well.

While it is common practice for a dental provider to follow up with a patient following an invasive surgical procedure (e.g., extraction or root canal), this follow up is traditionally done over the phone. Utilization of a teledentistry follow up adds a visual component that can aid the clinician in evaluation and changes to recommendation for post-operative care.

According to a July 2020 brief from the National Conference of State Legislatures, *Boosting Oral Health Care in Rural Communities* by Erik Skinner, "teledentistry consists of a range of services that include video consultations, sharing images and records among providers, provider education courses and patient monitoring to address a patient's oral health. It is an emerging tool to connect rural and nonrural residents to care." The brief continues, "teledentistry can increase a practice's capacity to screen for disease and connect patients with appropriate care." (<https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/boosting-oral-health-care-in-rural-communities.aspx>)

In a communications brief published in June 2020 by the DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement, 69% of patients surveyed indicated their concern was taken care of in their teledental visit and 31% did not require in-person treatment following their teledental visit. Teledentistry will not completely eliminate the need for in-person treatment, however, utilization can increase opportunity for a patient to seek consult from a dental provider. For instance, rather than taking an afternoon off from work to go to a dental clinic for an in-person evaluation only to need to return at a future date for definitive treatment, utilization of a virtual consult may eliminate the need to take time off from work and improve workflow, allowing the patient to ultimately receive definite care more efficiently.

Teledentistry is the groundwork to emerging the advancement of better oral health care opportunities for children and families that need it the most.

Derek Winegar, Dr

self, dentist

georgetown, TX

it will significantly degrade the quality of care given to patients over time. it is also much more than "teledentistry" in the fine print of the bill. it is a good example of very bad legislation in shiny packaging.

Lynda Bean, RDH, BSDH

Self

Salado, TX

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As a dental hygienist licensed in Texas for 33 years, I strongly support this bill to allow dentistry to utilize teledentistry to help alleviate health care shortages in underserved populations.

Annette Smith, RDH, MSDH

Self, Dental Hygienist and Educator

Trophy Club, TX

I support this bill because it increases access to health care. Part of Healthy People 2020 discusses increasing access to care. There are several populations such as rural, elderly, and children who would benefit from teledentistry. Hygienists are trained to gather information during the assessment phase of an appointment to help make a diagnosis. This includes going over a medical/dental history, taking x-rays, periodontal probing to check for health of the gingiva, performing an oral cancer screening and a visual and tactile exam. During this data collection phase, using technology, hygienists have the ability to take pictures of suspicious lesions that could be cancerous, or cavities. Dentists are then able to look at both images and x-rays and determine if additional treatment is needed. For those who have limited transportation such as children with working parents or the elderly, not requiring an in person exam would allow them to continue to receive preventative care such as dental cleanings and sealants without the physical burden of an in person visit. Additionally, if there is a problem such as a cavity, the information provided would allow for a diagnosis and require further follow up. Many people can go years without a new cavity It is important that a limitations such as a tactile visit each year not be a part of the bill. Research has shown that dentists are able to diagnose just as well through teledentistry as in person so the in person visit is not necessary. I hope that as you contemplate this bill, you look at the oral health of the residents of the state and vote yes for bill HB 2056. Thank you!

Angela Mair

Corbin Hines, DDS

FORT WORTH, TX

Please allow teledentistry. Thank you.

Brita McNeill, Registered Dental Hygienist

Self/ as well as Past President of Texas Dental Hygienist Association

Temple, TX

My name is Brita McNeill RDH,BS. I have practiced Dental Hygiene 35 years. I am a Past President of the Texas Dental Hygienists Association. It is time for Texas to look ahead and increase Access to care by supporting this bill. This past year of COVID should make it clear that we need more access to care and different avenues to make this happen.

Please help Dentistry be able to access patients in Nursing care facilities as this is a huge impact that would help a large population.

Andrea Wiseman, RDH

Self

Blanco, TX

During the pandemic so many of my colleagues were furloughed. Dental offices were shut down and our society was left vulnerable to tooth pain and had No access to care. There is nothing worse then a tooth ache. Preventive Oral Health Care Specialist need to move forward with their career in order to provide access to oral care for everyone equally. Oral Health is so important because it dictates the health of our bodies from start to finish.I want to help our society but without the necessary tools my career will stay stagnate, and our community will suffer. Help us be more efficient with oral health. It is the pathway for systemic disease. Tele-dentistry provides a way to communicate and help our patients with a level of care that is consistent. The baby boomer are quadrupling our geriatric society. There is Not enough oral healthcare workers to provide a service to this generation. Very few dentist wil go to a nursing home to take care of past patients and they are neglected as far as their oral health

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is concerned. Preventive Care Specialist(RDH) are willing 100% to help this generation on a daily basis. Tele-dentistry will provide Access to care.This Bill needs to pass so we can provide a service that is needed. it will open that door to so many people who don't have access to Care especially during a pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sandy Tesch, RDH

self/registered dental hygienist

Austin, TX

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 2056 relating to the practice of teledentistry dental services. As a licensed dental hygiene professional working in public health, I know the value of linking patients with healthcare professionals who are not otherwise easy to access. Statistics show that eighty (80) full counties in Texas are designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) with three (3) additional counties have partial HPSA designations. These concerns about limited oral health services for underserved populations are prompting providers to adopt innovative service delivery models to meet the needs of populations with access barriers. Populations living in rural areas experience diverse challenges to obtaining oral health services compared to those people living in densely populated or urban areas including higher rates of chronic disease, a higher percentage of elderly people, limited oral health workforce and provider organizations, higher unemployment, lower rates of dental insurance and greater dependence on public insurance coverage. These rural areas also may lack public transportation or reliable private transportation to access distant oral health services. Teledentistry is an expansion beyond the physical limitations of the traditional dental practice. It is a cost-effective modality for providing patient-centered services coordination through an inclusive team. It allows for real-time video consultations for treatment planning and specialty consultations from a distance. Preventive services can be delegated by a dentist to licensed dental hygienists to initiate treatment in alternative settings. This allows a patient to have preventive oral health services rendered on-site without the need for an in-office visit. Teledentistry can be used to screen individuals, collect data, triage dental conditions, prevent dental disease, and evaluate the care provided. States need to have legislation supporting teledentistry that assures that all dental and allied dental personnel are licensed in Texas and practice in accordance to state laws in which the patient receives the dental care. Teledentistry increases patient access to dental services and is a viable solution for reaching distant, rural populations especially in a large state like Texas. I speak in favor of establishing Rules for teledentistry services in Texas and utilizing enhanced information technology to expand telecommunications among oral health professionals. Thank you for your time and consideration.

LeeAnn Winkler, RDH, BSDH

Sef

Mesquite, TX

I am writing asking for support for the HB 2056 as filed.

This Bill would define "Teledentistry" and add it to TeleHealth. This pandemic has shown us how important it is to provide care to those in need. Texas has 80 entire counties that are Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. We need to correct this problem. The citizens of Texas deserve to receive dental healthcare.

This bill would allow a licensed healthcare professional for example a dental hygienist to work under the delegation of a dentist to provide care in another location other than the dental office. With the use of current technology including hand held x-ray machines, intraoral cameras, and electronic charts a dentist would be able to do an exam either synchronous (at the same time) or asynchronous (at a different time). This would enable a licensed provider to go into nursing homes, school based clinics, hospitals, public health clinics.

Our citizens deserve to be able to receive care without having to miss an entire day of work to travel to a dentist, without putting their health or the health of others in jeopardy, and without putting off care till they end up being treated in an emergency room.

I have heard that an amendment to this bill is going to be introduced to include a tactile (hands on) exam annually. I personally feel that this is going to put an undo burden on those needing to receive this care. How often when you go in for a dental cleaning do you need to receive treatment by the dentist. I personally have patients that can go for years only seeing the dentist for an exam in my room. A licensed trained healthcare professional and a dentist working as a team should be able to decide on their

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own when the patient need to be seen in person for a tactile visit. For some patients it may be at a 3, 6 or 9 month visit and for others at may be 3-5 years before they need to see a dentist in person.

So I am urging you to help the citizens of Texas to receive the card they need by supporting this Bill as filed.

Thank you foe protecting our citizens!

LeeAnn Winkler, RDH, BSDH

Jerry Valdez

Career Colleges & Schools of Texas

Austin, TX

CCST Supports this bill.

Kimberly Derr, Registered Dental Hygienist

Self, registered dental hygienist

Lorena, TX

II am in support of HB 2056.

Kimberly Derr, Registered Dental Hygienist

Self, registered dental hygienist

Lorena, TX

I am in support of HB 2056.

Amy Rothhammer

Self/ dental hygienist

Plano, TX

Teledentistry will increase access.

We have technology portable equipment, oral cameras and ability to see patients in school, nursing home and how this would allow you to provide preventive services remotely, dentist would review records, make diagnosis and determine if patient needed to be seen in person. If not, hygienist could continue to provide preventive care in alternate setting without wasted travel time and missing school , work, etc. those in nursing homes may not be easily able to leave facility to receive preventive care. This would enhance their life tremendously!

May I mention tactile visit mandates decrease access.

Lisa Cooper, RDH, BS

Self, clinical dental hygienist

Grapevine, TX

I have been a practicing hygienist for 40 years and see many geriatric and special needs patients. These patients require transportation to our office from their nursing homes and other institutions. Teledentistry would ease the logistics of transportation and most of their issues are denture sores, candida infections and other nutrition and hygiene problems that could be easily dealt with via Teledentistry. Please review this Bill with compassion for our elderly and special needs patients and their

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caregivers. Thank you

Hillary Holland

Self

Denton, TX

There is a staggering amount of research that illustrates the many barriers that underserved populations face in accessing quality oral health care, such as transportation and local availability of services. Reaching the final weeks in obtaining my DH license and bachelor degree, along with the effects of the pandemic, I've come to realize how much teledentistry would improve access to these populations. A dental hygienist is a specialist in prevention, and in some respects by simply observing the oral cavity we are able to distinguish areas of concern that have the potential to be cancerous. Teledentistry provides an opportunity to save lives. Please consider passing this bill to better the health of our communities and country. Thank you.

Jireh McCann

Self- dental hygiene student

Corpus christi, TX

Teledentistry increases access and will enable hygienists to provide oral health care for more people since transportation is a common barrier in the practice. This would enhance life tremendously.

Macaela Owens

Self Dental Hygiene student

Corpus Christi, TX

I support the passing of this bill. This bill will be very beneficial to patients that are unable to make it into a dental office whether it be because of health issues of the elderly, patients that have high anxieties of the dental office setting or unable to have travel accommodations to make it into the offices and much more. This bill will help increase the overall oral health of the state.

Leila Liberman, Dr.

self

Round Rock, TX

Passing this bill will allow an increase to access to care for all ages of the population. When using technology to assist in the exam-the hygienist would use the camera-send images to the DDS for diagnosis and then preventive care could be prescribed. The would help populations in nursing homes, schools and rural areas of Texas-this increasing access to care. There are several types of services that the dental hygienist could deliver that will help not only the oral cavity but the entire body in the long run.

Kassandra Bowie

TDHA, Registered Dental Hygienist

Mesquite, TX

Teledentistry would be a game changer when it comes to access to care. Think of all the Texans that physically can't get in to the dental office. Schools, nursing homes, even senior communities.

We've all learned from the challenges of COVID that things can successfully be done differently. With the help of intra-oral cameras and portable X-ray equipment, we could help so many more people with their preventive dental needs.

People who live great distances from a dental office could be screened from the comfort of their home and get a general idea of what treatment may be needed before making the trek to the office for treatment.

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Emergency room doctors could be lifted of the burden of putting a bandaid on weekend dental problems. ER visits for toothaches are very common yet the medical doctors can do very little to help. They are often advised to schedule with a dentist as soon as possible. Teledentistry would allow these patients access to experts in their condition and save money by avoiding an expensive hospital bill.

We would see the most significant increase in access to care in our senior communities. So many are confined to their nursing homes. So many lack the ability to perform basic daily oral hygiene. If hygienists could be allowed to provide preventive care in nursing homes, we would see so much improvement in the quality of life of these patients.

Melissa Scaggs

Self / Dentist

Flower Mound, TX

As a practicing dentist and practice owner in Texas over the past 18 years, I urge you to sign this legislation. I treat a growing geriatric patient base, many of whom find it difficult to obtain care in a traditional practice setting. Teledentistry would help open access to care for this growing population. Also, during the last 12 months, during the Covid-19 pandemic, I would have been able to provide care for many patients in a safer and more convenient manner. Please consider giving dentists the same ability to practice via video conference as our medical colleagues. Thanks you. Yours in Dental Health, Melissa Scaggs DDS MAGD

STACY LIMAS

Self - Dental Hygienist

San Antonio, TX

In the wake of Covid-19, our country has had to quickly readjust and adapt to the way we do everyday things, including how we visit our physicians. Many doctors' offices re-strategized and now provide Telehealth appointments to continue to serve their patients in a timely manner. Dentistry IS a medical profession and should also be moving towards evolving in the same way. Around this time last year, Governor Abbott ordered healthcare professionals to "delay elective treatment"(a necessary action). One consequence of dental offices limiting or cancelling appointments to comply with this order was that continuing care appointments were pushed back. It is my opinion the general public does not fully comprehend the link between oral/systemic health and took that closure as a directive to avoid going to the dentist.

Teledentistry increases access to care and is cost effective for both patient and clinician.

I work in a public health dental clinic and have heard numerous times from the patients that have returned "I wasn't sure if I should be going to the dentist". Our typical patient population is low income and/or uninsured, many of which have not visited a dentist in years. They have multiple unmet treatment needs including gross decay, abscesses, periodontal disease, or oftentimes a combination of the three. Utilizing Teledentistry would allow our clinic to reach more of this underserved population - those that physically cannot visit our clinic because of distance, issues with transportation, or even those that may be "unsure" of their visit.

According to an article by Fred Pennic (2020), "in times of emergency, a patient can immediately connect with a dentist remotely. This connection allows the dentist to more accurately assess the problem, suggest medicine, and save you time, money, and a stressful trip to a hospital or dental clinic. Thus, there is a lesser need for travel and a reduction in waiting times in dental practices. The cost of teledentistry is also lower, while still providing quality care." The cost of Teledentistry benefits the practice by possibly allowing MORE patients to be seen and by INCREASING the patient pool.

Teledentistry would provide an opportunity for clinicians to provide the aforementioned oral health education in an environment the patient feels comfortable in. Oftentimes when a patient feels insecure or unsure, there is a barrier to effective and open communication. Teledentistry may be a way to overcome this initial barrier.

Please help me better serve our community by passing HB2056. Thank you for your time.

Connie Groves, RDH

TDHA

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Houston, TX

As unfortunate and stressful as the pandemic has been for all of us, it has definitely proven the time is now for Teledentistry to be legal in the state of Texas. I am a dental hygienist with a bachelors degree. My education included biology, anatomy, chemistry, psychology, pharmacology, and the list goes on. In fact, I have taken many of the same courses as dental students. We are now dealing with a situation where people may not be comfortable going to the dentist. Or even worse, may not have a dentist in the same town or county and must make a decision to work and feed their family or take time off to go to the dentist. This is where dental hygienists are of great value. We have the ability to use technology and portable equipment to aid the patient. Such as intra oral pictures to send to the dentist for evaluation. Not to mention, we have the education to ask the pertinent questions to help the dentist diagnose a situation. I personally have a 99 year old friend in a nursing home. It is harder and harder for her to get to the dentist, not to mention during the pandemic, it is forbidden for her to leave the facilities. If we had Teledentistry, I could bring my equipment to her. I could take images and provide preventive services to aid in maintaining her oral health, which in turn will aid in her overall health. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Texas. Teledentistry also helps family members who have full time jobs and not able to get their elderly loved ones the the dentist. There are many scenarios where Teledentistry would be of great value and the time is now to make it available to the public by utilizing dental hygienists.

John Hackbarth, Dr

Self dentist

Texas city, TX

Sirs, my name is John Hackbarth. I am a dentist who has been practicing for 44 years. I want to support the bill approving dental hygienists to provide local anesthetics as part of their treatment. Texas is one of the few states not currently allowing this practice. With proper training and under the supervision of a dentist this should be allowed. There are not issues being brought forward by the states already allowing hygiene anesthesia. Some years back the TDA surveyed their members and a majority were in favor of hygiene anesthesia. For some reason the TDA still resists this practice. Please approve this bill. Thank you.

Rachel Mitchell, RDH

Dental hygienist

Grapevine, TX

Dental hygienist spend years about treating patients. I see patients for limited exams all the time when the doctor is busy. We can give better access for patients if we can get more freedom. This is well deserved. During these trying times hygienist are in high demand and doctors can't find good help. Let us help by allow more abilities