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Dear Chairman Berry and Members of the Economic Affairs Interim Committee:

As you review the Board of Dentistry (BOD) this coming week, please consider meaningful change that will treat all of the professions fairly while preserving public safety and choice. The following points illustrate the need for legislation to restructure the BOD:

- As of January 14, 2012 there were 616 licensed dental hygienists in the state and 634 dentists, yet there are 2 ½ times as many dentists on the Board. *Without exception other state boards that regulate more than one profession have EQUAL representation of each profession.*
- Dental Hygienists are the only professionals in Montana regulated by their primary employers. This creates “inequality of bargaining power,” a legal concept of unfairness when one party in an agreement has an advantage over the other.
- The educational requirements for dental hygienists exceed those of nurses. Nurses and dental hygienists both provide health care under general supervision, meaning that the doctor/dentist authorizes treatment but need not be present. *Nurses are not regulated by doctors. They have their own board comprised entirely of public members and nurses who regulate their own profession and ensure public safety.*
- Dental hygienists are more expertly educated, trained and qualified within our scope of practice to regulate the requirements, examination, practice and discipline of dental hygiene than dentists.
- The Department of Labor and Industry researched the cost of a separate board and *dental hygienists can support our own board without an increase in fees.* Currently dental hygienists are subsidizing the wasteful decisions of the BOD to try to suppress competition and deprive the public of choices such as purchasing bleaching products from salons. Similar efforts by dentist-led boards in other states have been condemned by the Federal Trade Commission.
- Dentists wrote such demeaning comments about dental hygienists in a survey by the Board of Dentistry, that it is clear we need our own board to be free from prejudice.

I participated in talks with the Montana Dental Association and the Denturists’ Association of Montana to negotiate a compromise that would keep all three professions within the Board of Dentistry.

- Dental hygiene suggested regulatory committees for dental hygiene and denturistry within the BOD, which would conduct all business regarding their professions and make binding recommendations to the full board.

- Dentistry suggested a similar plan that would require a supermajority vote of the board to reject the recommendations of the committees.
- We are in agreement that *a new board of dental providers or regulatory committees established by statute* are necessary.
- Dentistry would not discuss any change in the structure or composition of the BOD. They offered only standing committees for dentistry and dental hygiene *which would not even have a majority from those professions on the committees!* There has been a standing dental hygiene committee with no authority on the BOD for many years, composed of the two hygienist members of the board and one other board member. Those hygienists are extremely frustrated and have called for disbanding the committee because it has no purpose or authority. Their recommendations are ignored or outvoted by the board. It is a waste of time and money.

Please support legislation to create a new board of dental providers OR to create a dental hygiene committee within the BOD to assume all of the responsibilities of regulating our profession. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Colleen Grass, RDH