2017 Legislative Priorities
Washington State Dental Association

Protect Patient Safety and Preserve Market Choice

**Vote YES ON SB 5322/HB 1598**

This legislation prioritizes patient safety and quality patient care by ensuring that when a dentist contracts with an outside entity, the dentist retains both responsibility for, and control over, the delivery of care.

- Dentists support choice for patients and providers alike. SB 5322/HB 1598 allow dentists to contract with third parties while providing important protections for patients.
- SB 5322/HB 1598 filter the good corporations from the bad, whose practice models have harmed patients, as seen in the 2013 U.S. Senate Report.

**Vote NO on SB 5158/HB 1389**

WSDA opposes any efforts to allow non-dentists to influence or interfere with the professional judgment of a licensed dentist. Washington law should continue to ensure that dentists are, first and foremost, accountable to their patients and not corporations run by non-dentists.

- The best dental care results when decisions are left to the patient and his or her dentist. There should not be interference from third-party, for-profit corporations.

Protect Consumers by Expanding the Patient Bill of Rights to Cover Standalone Dental Insurance Carriers

**Vote Yes on HB 1316**

WSDA supports ensuring patients have the same protections when accessing dental care as when accessing medical care. WSDA also supports eliminating the unfair insurance practices of some dental insurance carriers.

- The patient bill of rights currently does not include insurance coverage provided by stand alone dental plans. Patients deserve the same protections when accessing dental care as when accessing medical care.
- These patient protections would:
  - Require carriers to have comprehensive grievance and appeal processes
  - Create an independent review organization to hear disputes related to decisions made by carriers
  - Require carriers to have written utilization review criteria based on reasonable medical evidence
- HB 1316 prohibits dental insurance carriers from taking punitive action against a provider when disputing a carrier’s decision about coverage or payment for dental services on behalf of a patient.
- HB 1316 prohibits dental insurance carriers from advertising coverage for dental services for which the carrier denies coverage.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT:
Mellani McAleenan
mellani@wsda.org
(253) 353-3676

Carrie Tellefsen
carrie@mmtlawfirm.com
(253) 576-9908

Trent House
trent@trentmhouse.com
(360) 888-3975

Brent Ludeman
brent@ludemanpartners.com
(206) 790-6255

Jim Justin
jim@jimjustingov.com
(360) 870-2618
Ensure Fair Auditing Practices

**Vote YES on HB 1314**

HB 1314 puts safeguards in place to ensure a fair and transparent Medicaid audit process. “Gotcha” auditing tactics discourage dentists’ participation in Medicaid and hinder access to care for low income families.

Promote Quality Dental Care for all Washingtonians

**Vote NO on HB 1364/SB 5224**

HB 1364 and SB 5224 would authorize mid-level dental providers with less training than a dentist but who could perform surgical procedures. These bills do not address the primary barrier to dental care: a chronic and persistent lack of funding for dental safety net programs.

**Vote YES on HB 1411, Support Dental Residencies**

HB 1411 would allow professional licensure of graduates from all accredited general dental residency programs in Washington in lieu of taking a board exam. This legislation will improve recruitment to residency programs in Washington’s rural areas and encourage advanced training for new dental school graduates. To qualify for this exemption, residency programs must demonstrate a commitment to underserved populations.

**Vote NO on HB 1339**

WSDA members firmly believe that the prescribing of opiates should only be done in specific, necessary circumstances. The overuse and abuse of opioids must be addressed, but hardline restrictions on a dentist’s prescribing authority will harm patients who have legitimate needs for pain medications.

**Vote YES on HB 1047**

WSDA members support ways to remove unused opioids and other medications from medicine cabinets. Drug takeback programs are a good way to ensure unused medications are not available for recreational use.

**Vote YES on HB 1054/SB 5025**

Increasing the legal sale age for tobacco to 21 is an effective strategy to fight tobacco use; about 95% of smokers start before age 21. In addition to other known dangers, studies show that tobacco harms oral health.

Offer Solutions for Dental Access

**Fund Expansion of Dental Residencies**

Dental residents are a superior alternative to dental therapists/midlevel providers. Unlike dental therapists, dental residents are fully trained dentists qualified to treat medically complex cases. Residency programs are tailored to serve patient populations with the most barriers to care. Dental residents are an efficient use of state funds. In most cases, federal funding covers the majority of resident-related expenses. On average, each dental resident provides $500,000 to $700,000 of care to underserved populations per year.

Providence Health & Services is requesting a capital budget appropriation to fund 40 percent of the overall cost for facilities in Spokane that will help ensure adequate dental care for Medicaid recipients in eastern Washington and for a similar facility in Lacey.

**FUND expansion of RIDE program**

The Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program trains providers in rural and underserved areas, increasing the likelihood of students practicing in these communities after they graduate. The U.W. School of Dentistry is requesting $1.96 million for infrastructure and personnel to expand the capacity and footprint of RIDE. This funding would also add a second year of dental curriculum to the program at Eastern Washington University, doubling the amount of time RIDE students would stay in Spokane.