



Testimony

Improving Access to Dental Care *TPPF Testimony on SB 430*

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Problem: Inadequate access to dental care in Texas

- 51 Texas counties have no dentist
- 76 counties have no dentist who accepts Medicaid
- Rural areas hit worst: 93% of dentists practice in major cities
- Problem particularly acute in children:
 - Most are Medicaid
 - Few dentists and fewer pediatric dentists accept Medicaid
 - Lack of good dental care in childhood leads to sicker adults with much greater medical needs and therefore higher costs

Bill allows dentist to delegate to dental hygienists pre-procedure injection of anesthetics; dentist is still in immediate vicinity.

Advantages (no evidence of disadvantages)

- More efficient use of dentists' time: ↑ access to care
- ↓ wait times to obtain care
- Cheaper for patient, insurer, and healthcare system
- Dentists care for more patients and make more money
- What do a 3★ chef and Denton Cooley have in common?

Possible concern re: public safety

- Hygienists give anesthesia in 44 states, D.C., and military
- No evidence (none) of danger to public, low quality, or dissatisfaction

References

- Davidson, John. 2016. [Dental Workforce Reform in Texas](#). Texas Public Policy Foundation.
- Hamilton, Michael T., Bette Grande, and John Davidson. 2017. [The Case for Licensing Dental therapists in North Dakota](#). Heartland Institute and Texas Public Policy Foundation.
- Van Beek, Michael, and John Davidson. 2016. [Dental therapists: A Proposal to expand access to dental care in Michigan](#). Mackinac Center and Texas Public Policy Foundation.

