



## DENTAL THERAPIST-HYGIENIST LICENSURE BILL

### *A Community, Job Creation Solution for Bringing Quality, Cost-Effective, Dental Care to Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexicans*

#### Access to Dental Services: A Health Crisis for Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexicans

- NM ranks 39<sup>th</sup> worst in the U.S. in the number of dentists/1,000 people. 69% of dentists are in NM metropolitan areas, and over 30% of our dentists are over age 60.
- 34% of all NM 3rd graders have untreated dental decay.
- Thousands of New Mexicans – working families, children, elders & persons with disabilities – do not have access to, or must wait many months for necessary dental care.
  - **Result:** Living in pain, miss school or work, low school performance, lost work productivity, life threatening medical emergencies, long-term serious health problems.
- Very few dentists include Medicaid patients as a significant portion of their patient mix.
- Demand will only increase: Federal law mandates dental coverage for children up to 21 yrs.

#### Dental Therapists: High-Quality, Local Community Providers

- Dental providers who under the off-site supervision of dentists, study after study shows provide high quality, cost-effective dental services to rural, tribal and underserved communities.
- Home-grown, culturally competent providers, selected by their communities, practice in their home or underserved community.
- Obtain rigorous, competency-based education, training and clinical experience.
- Expand dentists' reach to underserved and remote communities using telemedicine.
- Economically viable workforce model: Dental therapists provide a range of necessary and billable services from prevention education and teeth cleaning to routine extractions and restorations.
  - Cost employers less than 30 cents for every dollar they generate when serving underserved populations. (*Community Catalyst Report, May 2013*)
- Since 2005, provided care in remote Alaskan tribal villages. Over 90 years, provided care in 50 countries including industrialized countries with advanced dental systems like the U.S.
- Over 14,000 dental therapists practice worldwide.
- Approx. 20 states are looking to add dental therapists to their dental teams.

#### Dental Therapists: A Workforce Solution for New Mexico

- State Law Change Needed to: Restore Rural Communities' Right to Self-Determination & Tribal Sovereignty - For NM rural and tribal communities to have the right to train and employ a dental therapist NM state law must specifically allow dental therapists to practice in NM. Federal law took away rural and Native communities' rights to have dental therapists.
- JOBS, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & CAREER PATHWAYS
  - Career opportunities for all NM communities. (NM rural and low-income communities favor mid-level oral health providers for their communities and healthcare career path opportunities for their citizens. *Con Alma Health Foundation, 2010*)
  - Provides a career pathway for NM dental hygienists to become dental therapists.

- Allows NM entities to be eligible for a **federal demonstration program grant** to train or employ dental therapists to increase access to dental services in rural and underserved communities.

***Call to Action:***

- To improve all New Mexican's access to high-quality, cost-effective dental services,
- Provide jobs and economic opportunity for these communities, and
- Restore rural communities' right to self-determination and tribal sovereignty rights...

**Support the NM Dental Therapist-Hygienist Bill, that adds dental therapists to New Mexico's dental team.**

***To learn more and contribute to this innovative, healthcare access solution for NM,  
please contact: Health Action New Mexico***

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