

February 14, 2025

TO: Senator Bobby Jo Champion

FROM: Minnesota Dental Hygienists Association

RE: S.F. 1325 (Kupec)

Senator Champion,

The Minnesota Dental Hygienists Association (MnDHA) supports S.F. 1325 (Kupec) appropriating funds for expansion of dental assisting and dental hygiene programs in Minnesota. These grants and forgivable loans will allow educational programs to add students to their classes and ultimately graduate more oral health professionals to help ease the workforce shortages in our state.

According to the publication “Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today’s Labor Market”, 4 out of 10 dental offices are recruiting dental assistants and dental hygienists. Some of the attrition experienced can be contributed to the pandemic but 33.7% of dental assistants and 31.4% of dental hygienist respondents reported the intent to retire within 5 years. This 2022 survey of thousands of dentists, dental hygienist,s and dental assistants confirms the need for this legislation.

Creative ways are necessary to expand the current programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). The public deserves oral health services to be provided by competent licensed individuals. These bills can help reassure the public that will be the case.

Currently dental hygiene programs in Minnesota are looking at ways to increase class sizes. Lack of infrastructure for laboratory and clinical space as well as equipment needs are barriers to achieving this goal. S.F. 1325 is on the right track to alleviate these problems.

MnDHA will also do its part in recruiting qualified people to become dental hygienists. We support the students throughout their program and encourage them to see the profession as a life-long opportunity.

Thank you for hearing this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Heather McCauley, MEd, LDH, President

Minnesota Dental Hygienists Association