

Great News!!!

DENTAL THERAPY APPROVED BY FULL ARIZONA LEGISLATURE

HB2235 awaiting Governor Ducey's signature

On Thursday, May 3rd, the House of Representatives voted 47 – 13 to create a licensing and regulatory structure to allow dental therapists to practice in Arizona. The vote follows the Senate's unanimous vote on April 19th of 30 – 0.

"This bill is a win for every Arizonan. It is a win for bipartisanship, as our diverse coalition makes clear, and it's a win for the state as a whole," said Senator Nancy Barto, the bill's original sponsor. "We worked hard to bring all stakeholders to the table and the result is a bill that serves as model legislation for the rest of the country."

"Sweet victory through the power of collaboration" exclaimed AzDHA President Mary Busch upon learning of the news. "A collaborative spirit was front and center as we worked with the Dental Care for Arizona Coalition to make this happen!"

About the law:

The law stipulates that dental therapy education must be accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), the same organization that accredits dental hygiene and dental programs. The scope of practice includes preventive and limited restorative procedures and is based primarily on those services identified in the CODA Standards for Dental Therapy Education Programs. In addition to completing the necessary dental therapy education, an applicant for licensure must also be a licensed dental hygienist. A last minute agreement hammered out between proponents and opponents produced a bill that legislators could get behind. Some of the most significant changes made in this compromise agreement include the following:

- Allows dental therapists to work under direct supervision OR pursuant to a collaborative practice agreement after practicing 1,000 hours under direct supervision;
- Limits dental therapists to practicing in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), or FQHC look-alikes, community health centers, nonprofit dental practices that provide care to low-income and underserved populations, or private dental practices that provide care for community health center patients of record;
- Requires that dental therapists perform nonsurgical extractions of permanent teeth only under direct supervision; and
- Reduces, from five to four, the number of dental therapists per supervising dentist.

Once the bill reaches Governor Ducey, he will have ten days to either sign the bill or veto it; conversations with the executive office have indicated he will sign the bill. Then, it will go into effect 90 days later.