

POSITION STATEMENT

Massachusetts H4842

The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA®) opposes the passage of H4842, a measure permitting alternative pathways for individuals seeking licensure as dental hygienists in Massachusetts. While this legislation aims to address workforce shortages, it compromises the professional standards and integrity of dental hygiene practice.

The ADHA opposes policies that allow individuals to obtain dental hygiene licensure through alternative pathways. Permitting individuals in complementary roles to practice dental hygiene without completing the same extensive education and clinical training is harmful to patients and undermines the profession's integrity.

H4842 includes provisions for nontraditional pathways, such as allowing internationally trained dentists to pass a standardized board examination to obtain licensure without formal dental hygiene training. This bypasses the rigorous and comprehensive education provided by U.S. dental hygiene programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Dental hygiene education is specialized and distinct from other curricula, such as dentistry. These pathways fail to meet the critical standards necessary to ensure patient safety and uphold the integrity of dental hygiene practice.

The ADHA firmly believes that any individual seeking to practice dental hygiene in the U.S. must complete a CODA-accredited dental hygiene education program and meet the clinical training, examination, and practice requirements necessary to earn a dental hygiene license, without exception.

While the ADHA acknowledges and commends the collaborative efforts of the Massachusetts Dental Hygienists' Association to address workforce challenges and increase licensure standards, we maintain that formal dental hygiene education remains the only acceptable foundation for practicing dental hygiene.

At a time when workforce shortages challenge access to dental care, solutions must prioritize public safety, maintain professional standards, and focus on improving patient outcomes. Expanding eligibility for licensure without maintaining these standards is not the solution. The ADHA encourages dental hygienists and supporters to express their concerns regarding H4842.