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March 18, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H 5550 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions – Dentists and Dental Hygienists**

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter of support for H 5550, legislation that would standardize successor appointment language for various boards and adds language providing that a quorum would be most of the board and/or advisory committee seats filled and the language would apply across several healthcare professional boards and advisory committees that currently lack this language. This act would take effect upon passage. This legislation was introduced at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).

In addition to the Dental and Dental Hygienist board, H 5550 would also apply to the Advanced Practice Nurse Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee for Opticianry, Board of Licensure for Naturopathy, Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline, Board of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, Board of Social Work Examiners, Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Fitters, Board of Licensure for Physician Assistants, Board of Athletic Trainers, Board of Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists, Board of Dietetics Practice, Board of Radiologic Technology, and Board of Respiratory Care.

H 5550 would standardize RIDOH healthcare professional board and advisory committee successor appointment language and the definition of a quorum as a majority of appointed members. There are differences in statutory language regarding board member term limits and quorum requirements among the different boards and advisory committees within RIDOH. Some board statutes expressly allow board members to continue until a successor is appointed and qualified thereby ensuring the continued ability of the board to meet quorum requirements and function. Other boards do not contain this language, and some boards' quorum requirements are a defined number while others simply require a majority of the appointed members.

From a public health protection perspective, the practical result of this is that some board and advisory committees' current and future quorums and their ability to fulfill their licensing and disciplinary functions are at some risk. Disciplinary actions cannot take place if a quorum is not present. This proposal would standardize the successor appointment language and the definition of a quorum as a majority of appointed members across the boards and advisory committees that currently lack this language. This change will secure the board and advisory committees' ability to function in times of member transition, prevent delays in the licensing of much needed healthcare workers, and support the public safety by ensuring an expedient/timely disciplinary and licensing process.

These provisions or similar continued language already exists in the statutes that created some of the Department's other boards including, but not limited, to the Chemical Dependency Board, Chiropractic Examiners, Cosmetology Board, Embalming and Funeral Home Directors, Interpreters for the Deaf,

Massage Therapy, Midwifery Council, Nursing Board, Nursing Assistant Board, Nursing Home Administrator Board, Assisted Living Residence Board, Optometry Board, Occupation Therapy Board, Board of Pharmacy, Board of Physical Therapy, Podiatry Board, Psychology Board, Speech Pathology Board, and Veterinary Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation, which will ensure access to safe, quality health and professional services for all Rhode Islanders, including the State's vulnerable populations. RIDOH is happy to answer any questions the members of the Committee may have regarding the proposed amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jerome M. Larkin" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jerome M. Larkin, MD  
Director

CC: The Honorable Evan P. Shanley  
The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel  
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy