



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Patinkin Research Strategies, LLC
Ben Patinkin
RE: Statewide Survey of Washington Voters on Dental Therapy Legislation
Date: March 11, 2019

This analysis is based on a telephone poll of 500 registered, likely November, 2020 voters in the state of Washington. Interviews were conducted March 7-11, 2019 and the margin of error is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

Washingtonians Provide Significant Majority Support for Legislation Authorizing Dental Therapy

When respondents were given a brief, neutral explanation of proposed legislation authorizing the practice of dental therapy in the state, a majority (62%) offer support. Opposition is anemic at best with less than one-quarter (24%) lining up against. Just over one-in-10 Washingtonians are undecided on the

“The Washington legislature is currently considering a proposal that would expand dental care access by authorizing dental therapists to practice in Washington. Dental therapists are primary oral health professionals who perform routine and preventative dental care as part of a dentist-led team in a role similar to that of a physician assistant in medicine. Under this law dental therapists would be licensed and held to the same high-quality standards of dentists but would be trained to perform a much narrower range of commonly needed procedures such as doing exams and filling cavities. Having heard this, do you support or oppose this proposal?”

Support, strongly	22%	62% net “support”
Support, not strongly	40%	
Oppose, not strongly	18%	
Oppose, strongly	6%	24% net “oppose”
Don’t know	13%	

proposal. What’s more, “strong” support (22%) outpaces “strong” opposition (6%) by better than three-to-one, another indication of the breadth and depth of support for the proposed law.

Every major subgroup within the electorate offers majority support to the dental therapy proposal. Regionally, support is robust in King County (+31), however it’s even stronger in Snohomish and Pierce counties (+40) and in more rural counties across the state (+40).

Younger voters (+38) are more supportive than those over age 70 (+30). In addition, college-educated voters provide one of the widest margins in favor (+49), while blue collar voters offer a smaller double-digit lead (+26).

It’s worth noting that there is no real partisan gap to speak of. Over six-in-10 Democrats, Republicans and independents all support the dental therapy proposal.

In sum, these data indicate a deep well of support for the dental therapy proposal. A significant majority support the idea, the intensity of feeling leans heavily towards proponents, it garners bipartisan accolades and is extremely popular regardless of region—in fact, it does best in rural Washington.

	Support	Oppose	Undecided	Support Margin
Men	63%	24%	13%	+39
Women	62%	25%	14%	+37
King County	60%	29%	11%	+31
Snohomish / Pierce	65%	25%	11%	+40
Other	62%	22%	16%	+40
Under 50	63%	25%	13%	+38
Over 50	61%	24%	14%	+37
70+	58%	28%	15%	+30
Democrats	62%	25%	13%	+37
Independents	63%	24%	13%	+39
Republicans	61%	25%	14%	+36
Union HHs	78%	10%	12%	+68
Non-union HHs	59%	27%	14%	+32
No college	58%	32%	10%	+26
College+	66%	17%	17%	+49
TOTAL	62%	24%	13%	+38