



MEDIA ADVISORY

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HOUSE TO CONSIDER WORKFORCE SOLUTION

WHO: The [House Health Care & Wellness Committee](#) is holding a public hearing on an innovative solution to the lack of timely, preventive oral health care faced by children and families across Washington.

WHAT: [House Bill 1516](#) would bring an evidence-based dental provider to our state: a licensed dental practitioner who can free dentists to extend care to underserved communities.

WHEN: The hearing takes place at **1:30 p.m. on Tues., Feb. 5.**

WHERE: House Hearing Room B, John L. O'Brien Building, State Capitol, Olympia.

WHY: Out-of-date laws are keeping too many Washingtonians from getting the oral health care they need. Across the state, our dental care system is failing children and working parents in low-income families, elderly people in nursing homes, people with special needs and people who live in rural and Tribal communities. During a recent 18-month period, dozens of Washington emergency rooms recorded a total of 54,000 visits for dental treatment that could have been avoided earlier. Those visits cost taxpayers more than \$35 million.

HB 1516 is based on an approach that has worked for many years in many countries and, more recently, in Alaska and Minnesota.

“Washington residents lack access to a cost effective means of getting the oral health care they need,” says Rep. Eileen Cody, one of HB 1516’s 10 House sponsors. “It’s high time for dentists to gain the freedom to look after the needs of more people across our state.”

Dr. Alex Narváez DDS, dental director of Seamar Community Health Centers, has seen these providers at work in Alaska, where an additional 35,000 people can now access care.

“I am supremely committed to the safety and quality of care my patients experience,” Narváez says, “and I know that this workforce solution would put care within reach of thousands of children, parents and other adults. Dentists like me should have the freedom to hire this proven provider to meet the needs of our communities.”

Dr. Narváez is part of the Washington Dental Access Campaign (www.wadentalaccess.com), whose members are committed to bringing a proven workforce solution to our state.