

March 18, 2025

Dear Legislator,

The 677 members of the West Virginia Dental Association are gravely concerned about the future of patient safety in oral health care in West Virginia.

The removal of required hand-skill testing for dental and dental hygiene licensure in Senate Bill 458 – Universal Licensing is, frankly, shocking to our membership.

Patient safety is crucial in invasive, intensive professions, such as dental surgery, due to the high risks involved. The practice of dentistry includes biological, chemical, and physical risks to patients. Dentists must attend accredited institutions of higher education for a minimum of eight years to become highly skilled professionals who perform intricate procedures in the confined space of a patient's mouth. Dentists and dental hygienists use precise movements and specialized instruments to navigate this small area effectively.

The WV Dental Association insists that the minimal competency standards of a clinical hand skill evaluation must be met in order to protect the safety of the citizens of our State.

Currently, 82% of US states require hand-skill clinical exams for licensure. Forty-eight states offer the ADEX hand-skills test, and West Virginia accepts this along with the CRDTS+SRTA exam accepted by 36 other states. Clinical hand-skill tests are not state specific.

Not all dentists who complete their education pass clinical exams. *If SB 458 advances without amendment, foreign graduates and students from states not requiring clinical hand skills tests will be licensed to practice here – and that is alarming.*

Dentists and dental hygienists are an integral part of your community, caring for your constituents' oral health. We are a self-policing profession, and patient safety is our utmost concern.

Please help us keep our minimal competency standards so patients will have safe experiences when they visit their trusted dentists and dental hygienists.

Sincerely,



Hallie Mason,
Executive Director

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March 17, 2025

Delegate Chris Phillips, Chair
Committee on Government Organization
Room 213E, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

RE: Senate Bill 458- Universal Professional Licensing Act of 2025

Dear Chairman Phillips,

The WV Board of Dentistry (Board) regulates the practice of dentistry to ensure the public health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of our State. The Board licenses all dentists, dental hygienists, and dental specialists. Our current statute, among other things, requires that a candidate must have gone to an accredited dental school or residency program and passed a national clinical hand-skills exam. Our research has found that there are 8-10 states who do not have this same standard. Alternate pathways for licensure in these states have eliminated the clinical hand-skills evaluation.

The Board and the West Virginia Dental Association are in agreement that the minimal competency standards of a clinical hand-skills examination must be met in order to protect the safety of the citizens of our state. The lowering of standards can be directly correlated to poorer patient outcomes and potential harm to the patient. Therefore, we respectfully ask for an exemption from this bill, or an amendment that continues to require a national clinical hand-skills evaluation for dental licensure in our State.

Should you have any questions you may contact me at (304) 573-5928.

Respectfully,

William A. Klenk, DDS
President

Attachment (1)

cc: Members of the Committee on Government Organization
West Virginia Dental Association