



July 5, 2023

The Honorable Richard D. Roth  
Chair, Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development  
1021 O Street, Room 3320  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: AB 481 (Carrillo) – Enhancing the Dental Assistant Career Ladder –  
SPONSOR**

**As Amended July 3, 2023**

Dear Chair Roth:

The California Dental Association, representing 27,000 member-dentists throughout the state, is proud to sponsor AB 481 (Carrillo), which seeks to proactively address the dental assistant workforce by creating three new pathways to licensure for registered dental assistants (RDAs) and updates scope of practice duties to reflect new technologies.

Dentistry, like much of health care, is facing an ongoing workforce shortage exacerbated by the pandemic, particularly among dental assistants. The duties and responsibilities of a dental assistant are vital to the dental team and are often referred to as the “right hand” of the dentist. Unfortunately, recent data from the Dental Board of California show that half of the state’s 58 counties are experiencing a shortage of dental assistants. In 2021, an American Dental Association survey found that 44% of dentists identified that difficulty filling vacant staff positions had limited their practice’s ability to treat more patients. While addressing this workforce shortage will take multiple tactics and solutions, this bill will help alleviate the financial and time barriers that may dissuade individuals from pursuing a career in dental assisting.

California has set precedent with some of the most expansive scopes of practices for dental assistants in the country with three classifications for dental assistants: unlicensed dental assistant (DA), registered dental assistant (RDA) and RDA in Extended Function (RDAEF). This spectrum of dental assisting categories creates a unique career ladder that allows individuals to advance their skills, responsibility and compensation as their career progresses. Currently, two pathways exist to become an RDA: education programs, which can be cost prohibitive, and on-the-job training, which can be lengthy to complete. AB 481 will create additional new pathways to RDA licensure that will meet people where they are in life, in turn helping to further diversify the dental team workforce and make licensure more accessible. The new licensure pathways will include a preceptorship that

allows dental assistants to receive pay while training for RDA licensure; an alternative education pathway for Regional Occupation Programs (ROP) and adult education programs; and a pathway to streamline the process for out-of-state dental assistants moving to California by recognizing the Dental Assistant National Board (DANB) certification. Furthermore, AB 481 also will clarify the scope of duties and update duties to reflect new technologies used in the dental profession for all levels of dental assistants.

AB 481 is essential to ensure dental offices can continue providing access to quality dental care to Californians. The bill will ensure dental assistants are able to be fully trained and licensed quickly and safely to meet workforce demands while reinforcing the growth opportunities in the dental assistant career ladder and diversifying the profession.

For these reasons, **CDA is proud to sponsor AB 481 (Carrillo) and respectfully requests an AYE vote** in the Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development. If you have any questions or concerns about our position, please contact me at [Jessica.Moran@cda.org](mailto:Jessica.Moran@cda.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Moran" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jessica Moran, MPH  
Legislative Advocate

Cc: Members and staff, Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development  
Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo