



Testifying in person in support of SB 103
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Presented by Heath Hall, Vice President of Government Affairs
On behalf of
Heartland Dental
February 8, 2023

Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Pettey and Members of the Committee:

I am here today as a proud Kansan and to testify on behalf of Heartland Dental, the nation's largest Dental Support Organization (DSO), in support of SB 103, a bill that would eliminate Kansas archaic 20% Rule and allow entrepreneurial dentists to increase access to oral care for Kansans throughout the state.

You may be wondering what a Dental Support Organization is. A Dental Support Organization, or DSO, are companies that, simply put, help dentists go back to being dentists instead of having to deal with the hassles of administrative work, management, legal, procurement, accounting, facility maintenance, and everything else that comes with running a dental practice. DSOs also help new dental graduates get started on the right foot by matching them with an existing office and team that's a perfect fit, helping them start out in an environment that will help them learn, grow, and raise their professional trajectory. For young and seasoned dental professionals alike, DSOs present an increasingly attractive option.

DSOs do not provide clinical services. All clinical services are provided by, and under the direct supervision of licensed dentists.

The advantages to working at a DSO supported practice are many. Dentists can spend a higher percentage of their work hours seeing patients, increasing access to oral care in the surrounding community. DSO supported offices have access to cutting-edge dental technology and equipment which allows DSO supported doctors to provide the highest levels of care. DSOs enjoy greater buying power through economies of scale giving them the ability to negotiate with vendors and lower a dentist's supply costs. DSOs provide world class mentoring and continuing education programs that allow doctors to increase their skills and knowledge. Supported doctors receive highly competitive salary and benefits packages as well as the ability to maintain better work-life balance. These advantages, and many more, are why the DSO model of dentistry is the fastest growing dental model in America, attracting more than 30% of newly licensed dentists.



At Heartland Dental, our vision is to be a world-class company and the leader in dentistry. We help doctors and their teams deliver the highest quality dental care and experiences to the communities they serve. We do this while providing exceptional careers and creating value for our stakeholders. We currently support over 2,700 doctors in more than 1,700 offices in 38 states and the District of Columbia and have plans to grow our supported office count by more than 10% in 2023.

While the number of dentists and offices we support continues to enjoy significant growth in many states that is not the case in Kansas due to the 20% Rule. In Kansas we currently support 5 doctors and 13 hygienists in 3 offices that saw 7,820 active patients over the past 12 months, and we have no new offices in the pipeline. In Iowa, a comparable state to Kansas, we support 15 doctors and 34 hygienists in 11 offices that saw 24,500 active patients over the past 12 months, and we have 3 new offices in the pipeline.

There is good news, the number of dental offices and access to oral care can improve in Kansas. Access to oral care in Kansas will improve dramatically should this Committee and your colleagues in the legislature vote to eliminate Kansas archaic 20% Rule, a rule that is an outlier among the 50 states. No other state in America has a rule in place that limits the number of dental practices a licensed dentist can own or places an arbitrary requirement that a dentist must spend a minimum of 20% of their work week practicing or mentoring in any office they have an ownership stake in.

Repeal the 20% Rule and entrepreneurial dentists across the state wishing to grow a group practice and alleviate access to oral care issues will invest in the state and grow their presence. The increased number of dental offices in the state will mean an increase in the number of dentists and hygienists practicing in rural, suburban, and urban areas of Kansas.

The repeal of the 20% Rule will lead to Kansans having increased access to high quality oral care and good oral care has been proven to lead to better whole-body health. Oral health is linked to chronic illnesses like diabetes and poor oral health can cause damage to the heart, lungs, immune system and more. The time has come to remove the oral health obstacles the 20% Rule has created and ensure Kansans have access to high quality oral health care.

I would be remiss if I failed to thank the Kansas Dental Association for their cooperation in getting SB 103 introduced in the Senate.

This session, you can break down a bureaucratic barrier that is limiting access to oral care in the state and help usher in an era of oral care expansion in Kansas. For these reasons I ask for the Committee's favorable consideration of SB 103.

Respectfully submitted.