



Testifying in person in support of SB 103
Senate Committee on Public Health & Welfare
Presented by Heath Hall, Vice President of Government Affairs
On behalf of
Heartland Dental
February 1, 2024

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, in support of SB 103, a bill that would eliminate the Kansas archaic 20% Rule and allow dental professionals to increase access to oral care for Kansans throughout the state.

You are likely familiar with the Dental Support Organization (DSO) model of dentistry and understand that DSO's help dentists focus on the clinical care of their patients instead of having to devote a large percentage of their time to the procurement, legal, accounting, administrative and facility management elements of running a small business. The DSO model of dentistry is the fastest growing support model in the industry, especially among new and recent dental school graduates. DSO's help young dentists get their career started on the right foot by matching them with an existing dental office and experienced team of dental colleagues that provides a fertile environment and allows them to learn, grow, and raise their professional trajectory. For young and seasoned dental professionals alike, DSO support presents an increasingly attractive option.

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 currently support over 2,800 doctors in more than 1,700 practices in 38 states and the District of Columbia and have plans to grow our supported office count by nearly 10% in 2024.

DSO's do not provide clinical services. All clinical services are provided by, and under the direct supervision of licensed dentists. Heartland Dental is a doctor led company. We protect a doctor's clinical independence – there are no treatment or schedule quotas or forced product endorsements. Heartland supported doctors choose their own path for their practice.

Heartland Dental supports a network of local community dental practices with world-class support services allowing supported doctors to spend a higher percentage of their work hours seeing patients, increasing access to oral care in their communities. DSO supported practices have access to cutting-edge dental technology and equipment which allows supported doctors to provide the most advanced and highest levels of care within dentistry. DSO's enjoy greater buying power



through economies of scale giving companies like Heartland the ability to negotiate with vendors and help lower a supported dentist's supply costs. DSO supported dentists become members of a community where they can take advantage of world class mentoring from other supported doctors and continuing education, allowing them to increase their knowledge and improve their skills. Supported doctors receive highly competitive salary and benefits packages from their supported practices as well as the ability to maintain a better work-life balance, which is more important to young dentists than ever before. These advantages, and many more, are why the DSO model of support in dentistry is the fastest growing dental model in America, attracting more than 30% of newly licensed dentists to this kind of support.

While the number of dentists and practices Heartland Dental supports continues to enjoy significant growth in many states, that is not the case in Kansas due to the 20% Rule. In Kansas Heartland currently supports 4 doctors and 9 hygienists in 3 practices that saw 7,470 active patients over the past 12 months, and there are currently no new supported practices in our pipeline in Kansas. In Iowa, a comparable state to Kansas, we support 23 doctors and 36 hygienists in 11 practices that saw 25,880 active patients over the past 12 months, and we have 2 new supported practices in our pipeline in Iowa.

While these numbers may be disappointing to you, there is an opportunity for good news. The number of dental practices 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 the states archaic 20% Rule, a rule that is an outlier among the 50 states. That's right, 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 practice 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 oral health care in Kansas and grow their presence in the state. An increase in the number of dental practices in the state will lead to an increase in the number of dentists and hygienists practicing throughout the state of Kansas.

The repeal of the 20% Rule will lead to Kansans having increased access to high quality oral care and we all know that 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.

Let 2024 be the year you break down a bureaucratic barrier, a 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.