

Dental Therapy Education

1 **WHEREAS** the Native American Caucus Committee (NACC) is dedicated to the
2 well-being of all Native people of Washington State and the goals of the
3 Washington State Democratic Party; and
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5 **WHEREAS** it has come to NACC attention that American Indian and Alaska
6 Native (AI/AN) people have a higher prevalence of dental caries and untreated
7 tooth decay in all age groups compared to the general United States population,
8 with many AI/AN children experiencing dental caries before the age of two, yet
9 there are few dental caries prevention programs that target AI/AN children and
10 other oral health issues persist for the AI/AN population such as:

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12 ***Seventy-nine percent of AI/AN children aged 2-4 years have dental
13 caries;

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15 ***Majority of AI/AN children have tooth decay with 78 percent of the 6-14
16 year olds and 91 percent of the 15-19 year olds had a history of tooth decay;

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18 ***Despite a trend toward a reduction in tooth loss in the U.S. population,
19 older data indicate 25 percent of AI/AN people aged 35 to 44 years have
20 fewer than 20 natural teeth;

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22 ***Among all persons aged 55 years and older, nearly 75 percent have
23 fewer than 20 natural teeth;

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25 ***Fifty-nine percent of AI/AN adults have periodontal (gum) disease;

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27 ***Seventy-eight percent AI/AN adults 35-44 years and 98 percent of
28 elders (55 or older) have at least one tooth removed because of tooth decay,
29 trauma, or gum disease; and
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31 **WHEREAS** these disparities are directly attributed to a lack of dental health
32 professionals in the Indian health system in which HIS dental providers have a
33 patient load of 2,800 patients per provider, while general population providers
34 have approximately 1,500 patients per provider and the HIS experiences a very
35 high dental provider vacancy rate, with estimates that 26 percent of the dental
36 positions within the HIS are vacant, which contributes to the lack of access to
37 dental health services; and

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39 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Native Villages determined the most expedient and
40 successful approach to resolving their dental crisis was to send their Members to
41 New Zealand to learn how to provide dental care to their communities as Dental
42 Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) and presently provide DHAT training through
43 the two-year educational program managed by the Alaska Native Tribal Health
44 Consortium; and

45 **WHEREAS** it is the desire of NACC to support a two-year training model as
46 demonstrated by the Alaska DHAT and found in several research studies to be
47 highly successful based on a growing body of evidence; and

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49 **WHEREAS** the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee
50 held a hearing on the national dental crisis on September 12, 2013, where
51 testimony was offered noting the interest of Tribal Governments to expand the
52 DHAT program nationally; and

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54 **WHEREAS** the Washington State Health Care and Wellness Committee held a
55 hearing on HB 2312 concerning mid-level dental professionals on January 20,
56 2014, with supporting testimony offered by Swinomish Indian Tribal Chairman
57 Brian Cladoosby and his dentist, Dr. Ray Dailey who notes that at least 50 percent
58 of his patients could be treated by a DHAT providing more time is allow him to
59 serve more severe dental cases in his practice; and

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61 **WHEREAS** the House Committee on Community Development and Housing &
62 Tribal Affairs held a hearing on HB 2466, concerning Indian Tribes and DHAT
63 services on January 23, 2014, where testimony was offered noting the safety,
64 effectiveness and economic viability of DHAT programs; and

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66 **WHEREAS** Tribal Governments are seeking to expand the oral health workforce
67 to address unmet needs by replicating the Alaska DHAT model in Washington
68 State; and

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70 **WHEREAS** the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of 56 Tribes from
71 Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and parts of Alaska and Northern
72 California along with the National Congress of American Indians passed
73 resolutions supporting mid-level dental care providers on reservations that have
74 not been able to fund full time dental services or hire dentists to establish basic
75 services in rural and remote communities; and now

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77 **WHEREAS** the **Native American Caucus Committee of the Washington State**
78 **Democratic Party** does support a two-year standard for dental therapy education
79 as demonstrated by the Alaska Native DHAT Program; and
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81 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the Washington State Democratic
82 Central Committee supports the Title V of the Comprehensive Dental Reform Act
83 of 2013, HB 2321 and HB 2466, including its companion Senate Bill 6275,
84 introduced by State Senator John McCoy (D) of Washington State that seeks to
85 authorize tribes, tribal organizations, or certain federal programs to certify, train,
86 and employ dental health aides to serve tribal populations.
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89 Submitted by the Native American Caucus Committee to the Washington State Democratic Central
90 Committee for consideration at its February 1, 2014 meeting in Vancouver. (Submitted 1/29/2014)
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92 The WSDCC Resolutions Committee "AMENDED THIS RESOLUTION AND RECOMMENDED A
93 PASS" at its February 1, 2014 meeting in Vancouver.
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95 The WSDCC "PASSED" this resolution at its February 1, 2014 meeting in Vancouver