

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

SENATE, January 15, 2026.

The committee on Public Health to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1569) of Jason M. Lewis, Sal N. DiDomenico, James B. Eldridge and Bruce E. Tarr for legislation to improve oral health for all Massachusetts residents, report the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2854).

For the committee,
William J. Driscoll, Jr.

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An Act to improve oral health for all Massachusetts residents.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after

2 Section 34H the following new section:-

3 Section 34I. A public school shall notify the parent or legal guardian of a pupil described
4 in the second paragraph of section 57 of chapter 71 concerning the importance of oral health
5 screenings. The department of public health, in consultation with the board of registration in
6 dentistry, shall develop a standard form of notice containing, at minimum, information on the
7 importance of primary teeth; information on the importance of oral health to overall health as it
8 relates to learning; contact information for local public health departments; and information
9 about programs and services to access affordable dental care.

10 SECTION 2. Paragraph 4 of subsection (d) of section 7 of chapter 94C of the General
11 Laws, is hereby amended by striking out the words "practical nurse or a licensed dental
12 hygienist" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- practical nurse; a licensed dental

13 therapist under the supervision of a practitioner as defined in section 1 for the purposes of
14 administering analgesics, anti-inflammatories and antibiotics only; or a licensed dental hygienist.

15 SECTION 3. Subsection (a) of section 9 of said chapter 94C is hereby amended by
16 adding the following paragraph:-

17 A practitioner, as defined in section 1, may cause controlled substances to be
18 administered under the practitioner's direction by a licensed dental therapist, for the purposes of
19 administering non-narcotic analgesics, anti-inflammatories and antibiotics only.

20 SECTION 4. Subsection (c) of said section 9 of said chapter 94C is hereby amended by
21 adding the following paragraph:-

22 A licensed dental therapist who has obtained a controlled substance from a practitioner,
23 as defined in section 1, for dispensing to an ultimate user pursuant to subsection (a) shall return
24 to such practitioner any unused portion of the substance which is no longer required by the
25 patient.

26 SECTION 5. Subsection (a) of section 4O of chapter 111 of the General Laws is hereby
27 amended by adding the following paragraph:-

28 The dental director shall be responsible for recruiting, monitoring progress of, and
29 supporting dental health providers. The dental director shall aim to increase the delivery of
30 preventive dental services to underserved and vulnerable populations, including, but not limited
31 to, those residing in dental health provider shortage communities and pediatric and geriatric
32 patients.

33 SECTION 6. Paragraph (5) of subsection (b) of said section 4O of said chapter 111 is
34 hereby amended by striking out the words "community water fluoridation programs" and
35 inserting in place thereof the following words:- annual community water fluoridation programs.

36 SECTION 7. Section 43A of chapter 112 of the General Laws is hereby amended by
37 inserting after the definition of "Appropriate supervision" the following definitions:-

38 "Board", the board of registration in dentistry or a committee or subcommittee thereof
39 established in the department of public health pursuant to sections 9 and 19 of chapter 13,
40 chapter 30A and sections 43 to 53, inclusive.

41 "Collaborative management agreement", a written agreement that complies with section
42 51B between a dental therapist and a supervising dentist, as defined in section 43A, who holds a
43 valid license issued pursuant to section 45, who agrees to provide the appropriate level of
44 communication and consultation with a licensed dental therapist to ensure patient health and
45 safety.

46 SECTION 8. Said section 43A of said chapter 112 is hereby further amended by inserting
47 after the definition of "Dental hygienist" the following definition:-

48 "Dental therapist", a person who has been licensed by the board to practice dental therapy
49 under section 51B, and who has the appropriate training and works pursuant to a collaborative
50 management agreement as provided in section 51B.

51 SECTION 9. Said section 43A of said chapter 112 is hereby further amended by adding
52 the following definition:-

53 "Supervising dentist", a dentist licensed in Massachusetts who is a provider enrolled in
54 the division of medical assistance, or who works for an entity that is a provider enrolled in
55 division of medical assistance, who maintains an active patient list and routinely provides care,
56 and who enters into a collaborative management agreement with a licensed dental therapist.

57 SECTION 10. Said chapter 112 is hereby amended by inserting after section 51A the
58 following section:-

59 Section 51B. (a) Any person of good moral character, who: (i) is a graduate of a master's
60 level dental therapist education program, or its equivalent, approved by the Commission on
61 Dental Accreditation; (ii) passes a comprehensive, competency-based clinical examination that is
62 approved by the board and administered by a recognized national or regional dental testing
63 service that administers testing for dentists and other dental professionals or equivalent
64 examination administered by another entity approved by the board; and (iii) obtains a policy of
65 professional liability insurance and shows proof of such insurance as required by rules and
66 regulations shall, upon payment of a fee to be determined annually by the commissioner of
67 administration under the provision of section 3B of chapter 7, be licensed as a dental therapist
68 and be given a certificate to practice in this capacity. A licensed dental therapist shall have
69 practiced under the direct supervision of a supervising dentist for a minimum of 1,000 hours
70 before practicing under general supervision pursuant to a collaborative management agreement.

71 For the purposes of this section, "general supervision" shall mean supervision of
72 procedures and services based on a written collaborative management agreement between a
73 licensed dentist and a licensed dental therapist but not requiring a prior exam or diagnosis by a
74 supervising dentist or the physical presence of a supervising dentist during the performance of

75 those procedures and services unless required by the supervising dentist in the collaborative
76 management agreement.

77 (b) An applicant for licensure as a dental therapist in the commonwealth must graduate
78 from a master's level dental therapist education program, or its equivalent, approved by the
79 Commission on Dental Accreditation. All dental therapy educational programs in the
80 commonwealth must include at least one licensed dentist as an instructor. The board shall
81 provide guidance for any educational entity or institution that may operate all or some portion of
82 a dental therapy program, or may collaborate with other educational entities, including but not
83 limited to universities, colleges, community colleges, and technical colleges, to operate all or
84 some portion of a dental therapy program. The board shall provide guidance to develop
85 mechanisms to award advanced standing to students who have completed coursework at other
86 educational programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. All education
87 programs must prepare students to perform all procedures and services within the dental therapy
88 scope of practice as set forth in this section. As determined by the board and established through
89 regulations, dental therapists may be authorized to perform additional procedures through
90 continuing education courses approved by the board.

91 The educational curriculum for a dental therapist educated in the commonwealth shall
92 include training on serving patients with special needs including, but not limited to, people with
93 developmental disabilities including autism spectrum disorders, mental illness, cognitive
94 impairment, complex medical problems, significant physical limitations and the vulnerable
95 elderly.

96 Not later than January 1, 2027, the board shall approve a comprehensive, competency-
97 based clinical dental therapy examination that includes assessment of technical competency in
98 performing the procedures and services within the scope of practice as set forth in this section, to
99 be administered by a recognized national or regional dental testing service that administers
100 testing for dentists and other dental professionals. The examination shall be comparable to the
101 examination given to applicants for a dental license but only for the limited scope of dental
102 services in the dental therapy scope of practice as set forth in this section.

103 (c) The board shall grant a dental therapy license by examination to an applicant, upon
104 payment of a fee as determined annually by the secretary of administration and finance under
105 section 3B of chapter 7, provided the applicant is of good moral character and has: (i) met the
106 eligibility requirements as defined by the board; (ii) submitted documentation to the board of a
107 passing score on a comprehensive, competency-based clinical examination, or combination of
108 examinations, that assesses competency in dental therapy and is approved by the board and
109 administered by a recognized national or regional dental testing service that administers testing
110 for dentists and other dental professionals; and (iii) submitted to the board documentation of a
111 passing score on the Massachusetts Dental Ethics and Jurisprudence Examination or any other
112 successor examination. An applicant failing to pass the examination shall be entitled to re-
113 examination pursuant to the rules and guidelines established by the Commission on Dental
114 Competency Assessments, for which the applicant shall pay a fee as determined annually by the
115 secretary of administration and finance under section 3B of chapter 7.

116 The board shall require as a condition of granting or renewing a license under this
117 section, that the dental therapist apply to participate in the medical assistance program
118 administered by the secretary of health and human services in accordance with chapter 118E and

119 Title XIX of the Social Security Act and any federal demonstration or waiver relating to such
120 medical assistance program for the limited purposes of ordering and referring services covered
121 under such program, provided that regulations governing such limited participation are
122 promulgated under said chapter 118E. A dental therapist practicing in a dental therapist role who
123 chooses to participate in such medical assistance program as a provider of services shall be
124 deemed to have fulfilled this requirement.

125 The board shall grant a license by credentials, without further professional examination,
126 to a dental therapist licensed in another jurisdiction, upon payment of a fee as determined
127 annually by the secretary of administration and finance under section 3B of chapter 7, provided
128 the applicant is of good moral character and has: (i) met the eligibility requirements as defined
129 by the board; (ii) furnished the board with satisfactory proof of graduation from an education
130 program, or combination of education programs, providing dental therapyeducation that meets
131 the standards of the Commission on Dental Accreditation, provided, however, that an applicant
132 who graduated from a dental therapy education program established before the Commission on
133 Dental Accreditation established a dental therapy accreditation program is eligible
134 notwithstanding the lack of accreditation of the program at the time the education was received;
135 (iii) submitted documentation of a passing score on a dental therapy examination administered
136 by another state or testing agency that is substantially equivalent to the board-approved dental
137 therapy examination for dental therapists as defined in this section; (iv) submitted documentation
138 of a passing score on the Massachusetts Dental Ethics and Jurisprudence Examination or any
139 other successor examination; and (v) submitted documentation of completion of 1,000 hours of
140 practice. If such practice requirement is not met, a dental therapist shall be required to complete

141 the remaining hours or years, whichever is longer, under direct supervision in the
142 Commonwealth prior to practicing under general supervision.

143 (d) Pursuant to a collaborative management agreement, a dental therapist licensed by the
144 board may perform all acts in the Commission on Dental Accreditation's dental therapy
145 standards. Dental therapists shall have the authority to perform an oral evaluation and assessment
146 of dental disease and formulate an individualized treatment plan as authorized by the supervising
147 dentist in the collaborative management agreement. A dental therapist may dispense and
148 administer the following medications within the parameters of the collaborative management
149 agreement and with the authorization of the supervising dentist: non-narcotic analgesics, anti-
150 inflammatories and antibiotics. The authority to dispense and administer shall extend only to the
151 categories of drugs identified in this paragraph and may be further limited by the collaborative
152 management agreement. A dental therapist is prohibited from dispensing or administering
153 narcotic analgesics. A dental therapist may oversee not more than 2 dental assistants, but shall
154 not oversee public health dental hygienists.

155 After entering into their first collaborative management agreement with a supervising
156 dentist, dental therapists shall practice under direct supervision for not less than 1,000 hours.
157 After completing at least 1,000 hours of practice under direct supervision, dental therapists are
158 authorized to perform all procedures and services listed in the Commission on Dental
159 Accreditation's dental therapy standards, as set forth in regulations by the board, under general
160 supervision if authorized by a supervising dentist pursuant to a written collaborative agreement.

161 Pursuant to a collaborative management agreement, a dental therapist may provide
162 procedures and services permitted under general supervision when the supervising dentist is not

163 on-site and has not previously examined or diagnosed the patient provided the supervising
164 dentist is available for consultation and supervision if needed through telemedicine or by other
165 means of communication. If the supervising dentist will not be available, arrangements shall be
166 made for another licensed dentist to be available to provide timely consultation and supervision.

167 A dental therapist may not operate independently of, and may not practice or treat any
168 patients without, a supervising dentist. A dental therapist is prohibited from practicing without
169 entering into a collaborative management agreement with a supervising dentist.

170 (e) The board shall establish appropriate guidelines for a written collaborative
171 management agreement. A collaborative management agreement shall be signed and maintained
172 by the supervising dentist and the dental therapist and shall be submitted annually to the board.

173 The agreement may be updated as necessary. The agreement shall serve as standing
174 orders from the supervising dentist and shall address: (i) practice settings; (ii) any limitation on
175 services established by the supervising dentist; (iii) the level of supervision required for various
176 services or treatment settings; (iv) patient populations that may be served; (v) practice protocols;
177 (vi) record keeping; (vii) managing medical emergencies; (viii) quality assurance; (ix)
178 administering and dispensing medications; (x) geographic distance limitations; (xi) oversight of
179 dental assistants; and (xii) referrals for services outside of the dental therapy scope of practice.

180 The collaborative management agreement shall include specific protocols to govern situations in
181 which the dental therapist encounters a patient who requires treatment that exceeds the
182 authorized scope of practice of the dental therapist. The supervising dentist is responsible for
183 directly providing, or arranging for another dentist or specialist within an accessible geographic
184 distance to provide, any necessary additional services outside of the dental therapy scope of

185 practice needed by the patient. A supervising dentist may have a collaborative management
186 agreement with not more than 3 dental therapists at the same time. A practice or organization
187 with more than 1 practice location listed under the same business name may not employ more
188 than 6 dental therapists, provided, however, that this requirement shall not apply if such an
189 organization or practice is a federally qualified health center or look-alike, a community health
190 center, a non-profit practice or organization, public health setting as defined by 234 CMR 2.02,
191 or as otherwise permitted by the board.

192 (f) No medical malpractice insurer shall refuse primary medical malpractice insurance
193 coverage to a licensed dentist on the basis of whether they entered into a collaborative
194 management agreement with a dental therapist. A dental therapist may not bill separately for
195 services rendered; the services of the dental therapist are the services of the supervising dentist
196 and shall be billed as such.

197 (g) Not less than 50 per cent of the patient panel of a dental therapist, as determined in
198 each calendar year, shall consist of patients who are MassHealth members or are considered
199 underserved; provided, however, that this requirement shall not apply if the dental therapist is
200 operating in a federally qualified health center or look-alike, community-health center, non-profit
201 practice or organization, or other public health setting as defined by 234 CMR 2.02, or as
202 otherwise permitted by the board. As used in this section, "underserved" means individuals who:
203 (i) receive, or are eligible to receive, benefits through the division of medical assistance; (ii)
204 receive, or are eligible to receive, social security disability benefits, supplemental security
205 income, or a Massachusetts state supplement program; (iii) live in a dental health professional
206 shortage area as designated by the federal department of health and human services; (iv) reside in
207 a long-term care facility licensed under section 71 of chapter 111; (v) receive dental services at a

208 public health setting as defined by 234 CMR 2.02; (vi) receive benefits, or are eligible to receive
209 subsidized insurance through the commonwealth health insurance connector authority; (viii)
210 receive benefits, or are eligible to receive benefits, through the Indian Health Service, tribal or
211 urban Indian organizations, or through the contract health service program; (ix) receive benefits,
212 or are eligible to receive benefits, through the federal department of veterans affairs or other
213 organization serving veterans; (x) are elderly and have trouble accessing dental care due to
214 mobility or transportation challenges; (xi) meet the Commission on Dental Accreditation's
215 definition of people with special needs; (xii) are uninsured and have an annual income at or
216 below 305% of the federal poverty level; or (xiii) as otherwise defined by the board.

217 An employer of a dental therapist shall submit annual reports to the board that provide
218 information concerning the makeup of the dental therapist's patient panel, including the
219 percentage of underserved in the patient panel. No later than January 1, 2027, the secretary of
220 health and human services may establish by regulation penalties for employers who fail to meet
221 the requirements pertaining to the percentage of underserved in the dental therapist's patient
222 panel.

223 (j) Not later than January 1, 2028, the board, in consultation with the department shall
224 establish regulations to implement the provisions of this section for the practice of dental therapy
225 to protect the public health, safety and welfare, including, but not limited to: requirements for
226 approval of educational programs; guidelines for collaborative management agreements,
227 continuing education requirements, license renewal, standards of conduct, and the investigation
228 of complaints, conduct of disciplinary proceedings and grounds for discipline.

229 SECTION 11. The definition of "Core competencies" in section 259 of chapter 112 of the
230 General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after clause (i) the following clause:-

231 (j) Oral health education;

232 SECTION 12. The second paragraph of section 260 of chapter 112 of the General Laws
233 is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- As a condition for licensure or renewal of
234 licensure, the board shall require community health workers to receive education or training in
235 oral health.

236 SECTION 13. The definition of "health care provider" in subsection (a) of section 79L of
237 chapter 233 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after the word "dentist," the
238 following words:- dental therapist.,

239 SECTION 14. The department of public health, in consultation with the executive office
240 of health and human services, shall perform a 5-year evaluation of the impact of dental
241 therapists, as established under section 51B of chapter 112 of the General Laws, on patient
242 safety, cost-effectiveness and access to dental services. The department may enter into an inter-
243 agency agreement with the health policy commission, established under chapter 6D of the
244 General Laws, to provide assistance to the department in conducting such evaluation, as it deems
245 necessary. The department shall ensure effective measurements of the following outcomes and
246 file a report of its findings, which shall include the:

247 (i) number of dental therapists in the commonwealth each year;

248 (ii) number of licensed dental therapists in the commonwealth each year;

249 (iii) number of new and total patients served each year;

250 (iv) impact on wait times for needed services;

251 (v) impact on travel time for patients;

252 (vi) impact on emergency room usage for dental care; and

253 (vii) costs to the public health care system.

254 The report shall be submitted not later than 5 years after the date of graduation of the first

255 graduating class of dental therapists educated in the commonwealth to the joint committee on

256 public health, the joint committee on health care financing and the senate and house committees

257 on ways and means.

258 The center for health information and analysis shall, by the first day of January of each

259 year, submit a report on dental therapists, including information on:

260 (i) number of dental therapists in the commonwealth;

261 (ii) number of licensed dental therapists practicing in the commonwealth;

262 (iii) number of new and total patients served;

263 (iv) number of new and total pediatric patients served, including geographic location and

264 insurance type;

265 (v) practice settings; and

266 (vi) commonly performed procedures and services.

267 Not later than 3 years after the date of graduation of the first graduating class of dental

268 therapists educated in the commonwealth, the first annual report shall be submitted to the joint

269 committee on public health, the joint committee on health care financing and the senate and
270 house committees on ways and means.