Dental Therapist Licensure Bill

**Purpose of Legislation:** This legislation would include dental therapists (DTs) as a part of New Mexico’s dental team. DTs would improve access to quality, cost-effective dental services and provide jobs and economic opportunity for New Mexico’s underserved, rural and tribal communities. DTs would improve the health of New Mexico’s working families, children, disabled and elders and provide a workforce solution to New Mexico’s dental crisis.

**Defines Dental Therapists:** A dental therapist is an individual who –

1) Has graduated from one of the following education programs developed in partnership with an accredited institution of higher learning:
   a) a dental therapy-hygiene educational program that provides a competency-based dental therapy and dental hygiene curriculum;
   b) OR, (Accelerated Hygienist Pathway) if already a licensed dental hygienist, has graduated from a dental therapy education program that provides a competency-based dental therapy curriculum.
2) After graduating, has completed at least 400 additional clinical hours under the indirect supervision of a dentist;
3) Has passed a comprehensive competency-based exam given by a nationally recognized regional testing agency if available, and if not available by an institution of higher education with a dental therapy education program, following his or her completion of a dental therapy educational program;
4) Has passed a written examination covering the laws and rules for practice in NM;
5) Holds a license to practice dental therapy and dental hygiene in the state; and
6) Once licensed, can practice under the general supervision (off-site) of a dentist under a written “dental therapist management agreement.”

*(General supervision means the supervision of tasks or procedures by an off-site dentist at the time the tasks or procedures are being performed, pursuant to DT management agreement between the dentist and dental therapist, so long as those tasks and procedures are within the scope of practice for a DT. General supervision of a DT is achieved through regular and as needed communication between the dentist and DT using phone, telemedicine/health information technology.)*

**Includes Dental Therapist Scope of Practice - A Cost-Effective, Financially Viable Workforce Model:**
DTs provide a range of routine treatment and restorative care services as well as prevention and education services. These quality, billable services make dental therapists a cost-effective, financially viable workforce model. Includes a career pathway for hygienists who with a minimum additional year of education and training can become DTs. DTs can practice only in (1) settings located in federal or state designated dental health provider shortage areas AND (2) after 5 yrs consecutive employment with the same employer 15% of a dental therapists patients must be Medicaid recipients.

**Licensure, Fees & Accountability:**
Establishes licensure requirements, fees, and accountability requirements for DTs that reflect those of dentists and dental hygienists.

**Establishes Dental Board as DT Licensing Authority** The NM Dental Board makes the final determination for licensure, practice and regulation of DTs based on the recommendations of the Joint Committee. The joint committee is comprised of all currently sitting dentist Dental Board members, hygienist Hygiene Committee members, public members and one DT or DT representative who is appointed by the Governor and is a voting member of only the Joint Committee.