CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY • GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR
DENTAL HYGIENE BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
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Dental Hygiene Board of California
Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 13, 2026

Public Access Teleconference Meeting Location:
DHBC Headquarters Building
2005 Evergreen Street
1st Floor Lake Tahoe Room 1290
Sacramento, CA 95815

Please note that the Board conducted Friday's meetings online through WebEx.

DHBC Members Present:
President – Joanne Pacheco, Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) Educator Member
Registered Dental Hygienist in Alternative Practice (RDHAP) Member – Michael Long
Public Health Dentist Member – Dr. Sridevi Ponnala
Public Member – Dr. Julie Elginer
Public Member – Nicolas Kiet Quach

DHBC Members Absent:
Vice President – Sonia "Pat" Hansen, RDH Member
Secretary – Naleni "Lolly" Tribble-Agarwal, RDH Member
Public Member – Sherman King
Public Member – Vacant

DHBC Staff Present:
Anthony Lum, Executive Officer
Tifany Moore, Assistant Executive Officer
Adina A. Pineschi-Petty, Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), Education, Legislative, and Regulatory Specialist
Traci Napper, Licensing Program Manager
Crystal Yuyama, Administrative Analyst
Yuping Lin, Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Legal Counsel for the DHBC

1. FULL Board Agenda Item 1: Roll Call and Establishment of a Quorum

Joanne Pacheco, President of the Dental Hygiene Board of California (DHBC, Board), reviewed meeting guidelines and called the meeting to order at **11:07 a.m.** Board Staff, Crystal Yuyama completed the roll call, and a quorum was established with five (5) members present.

2. FULL BOARD Agenda Item 2: Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

Board Member comment: None.

Public comment: None.

3. FULL Agenda Item 3: Discussion and Possible Action to Take a Position on Assembly Bill (AB) 1952 Berman: Dentistry: Dental Hygienists: Licensure.

Motion: President Pacheco moved for the Full Board to take a position of opposed unless amended to require the Dental Board of California (DBC) to regulate foreign trained dentists.

Second: Member Long.

Board Member discussion: The Board members engaged in a robust discussion on AB 1952 regarding licensure for internationally trained dentists. Board members expressed concerns about ensuring adequate clinical experience for foreign-trained dentists and discussed which board would be the most appropriate authority for issuing and regulating this license type.

Public comment: JoAnn Galliano, Educational Consultant for the DHBC, emphasized the need for clear duties regarding consumer protection between the DBC and the DHBC. Ms. Galliano stated that regulation of foreign-trained dentists should remain with the DBC and should be responsible for assessing competency, setting supervision standards, and enforcing scope of practice. She stated that dental hygiene is a separate profession and that it is inappropriate for the DHBC to regulate dentists performing hygiene duties, given limited verification of their training and education. Ms. Galliano recalled during her years of being an educator of a dental hygiene program that foreign-trained dentists often have little to no information on how to treat periodontal disease and hygiene care treatment.

Bryce Docherty, Executive Officer of the Dental Board of California (DBC), stated that the DHBC should seek clarification on the bill's intent directly from its author and sponsors. EO Docherty then read the sponsor's fact sheet, noting that it indicates AB 1952 is intended, in part, to expand the dental hygiene workforce by allowing internationally trained dentists to qualify for licensure.

Susan McLearan of the California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) disputed claims of a dental hygienist shortage, arguing it is a maldistribution issue instead. She stated that the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) will report its findings on whether there is a shortage upon completion of the study. Ms. McLearan stated that claims of a workforce shortage are not factual at this point in time and should not be used as the reasons behind the intent of the bill. She added that she supports the comments made by President Pacheco and Ms. Galliano that the DBC should be responsible for the licensure of international dentists.

Susan Lopez, RDH and member of the CDHA, expressed support for establishing a pathway that would allow internationally trained dentists to participate in oral health care; however, she emphasized that the development and oversight of any such licensure pathway should reside solely with the DBC. She opposed assigning the financial or administrative burden of this program to licensed dental hygienists or to the DHBC. Ms. Lopez noted that the bill assumes that both domestic and internationally trained dentists possess sufficient education and clinical skills to provide essential oral health services, which contradicts their experience as a former clinical instructor in the dental student clinic at the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry. She stated that dental students receive limited clinical and dental hygiene instruction, and that international dentists often lack sufficient education and skills in this area to ensure the health and safety of Californians.

Tooka Zokaie on behalf of the California Dental Association (CDA) expressed appreciation for collaborating with the DHBC on equitable pathways into the dental hygiene profession. She emphasized that licensure must include rigorous evaluation of clinical and professional competencies to protect consumer safety and access to care. She clarified that AB 1952 does not alter oversight requirements for internationally trained dentists pursuing RDH licensure. Ms. Zokaie stated that California has a significant number of internationally trained dentists whose clinical training, cultural, and linguistic competencies are underutilized and who currently lack a pathway into the RDH profession. CDA encouraged the Board to consider licensure pathways that account for appropriate education and clinical training, stating that AB 1952 aims to establish a rigorous process for internationally trained dentists to enter the RDH workforce under the oversight of the DBC to ensure only qualified individuals enter the workforce.

Lisa Huitron, RDH, noted that a pathway currently exists for internationally trained dentists through dental hygiene programs. Ms. Huitron referenced a former classmate in her hygiene program who as an internationally trained dentist with more than 20 years of experience reported not receiving comparable dental hygiene education in their home county and found the hygiene program to be beneficial. Ms. Huitron stated that creating an alternative pathway could undermine or diminish the established competencies required in accredited dental hygiene education and urged careful consideration before altering existing standards.

Paula Snyder, Trustee of Santa Clara Valley Dental Hygienists' Association, stated that internationally trained dentists require the same level of dental hygiene education and clinical training as new hygiene students. She stated that foreign-trained dentists often relocate to urban areas, which are already well served, while workforce needs persist in underserved regions. Ms. Snyder acknowledged the University of the Pacific's remote dental hygiene program, which maintains rigorous standards and brings accredited education to underserved communities through small cohorts of local students and local hygienist educators. She concluded by supporting more accessible and affordable pathways for foreign-trained dentists to practice dentistry while preserving high standards in dental hygiene training.

Jeannette Diaz-Olivera, RDH and Dental Hygiene Educator, stated their opposition to the proposed amendment and to AB 1952 as it is currently written. She noted that the proposed 300 hours of training does not reflect the comprehensive didactic and competency-based clinical education required in accredited dental hygiene programs, which cannot be replaced by short-term work experience. Ms. Diaz-Olivera also questioned the practicality of requiring dentists to supervise these hours, given existing limitations in dentist oversight. She emphasized the Board's primary responsibility is consumer protection and stated that licensure pathways must ensure that individuals providing dental hygiene services receive education specifically designed for the profession, in order to maintain public confidence in the competency of licensed dental hygienists.

EO Lum addressed several points raised during public comment. He reiterated that the licensee population has remained stable and that the issue is one of maldistribution rather than a statewide shortage. The EO also stated that a pathway already exists for internationally trained dentists to obtain RDH licensure by applying to a DHBC approved dental hygiene program. He stated that there should be no shortcuts introduced into this process to uphold consumer protection. He added that the staff-recommended motion reflects the bill's current language and the potential operational impact on the Board should the Legislature assign these responsibilities to the DHBC without amendment. The EO stated that, while many commenters believe the Dental Board should oversee such pathways, the final decision rests with the Legislature. EO Lum encouraged the Board to consider all comments when deliberating on the motion.

Board members discussed whether to amend the motion to explicitly reflect two primary concerns: that any proposed pathway should be regulated by the DBC rather than the DHBC, and that the proposed 300 hours of training is significantly below the standards of accredited dental hygiene programs. Members noted that additional amendments could be made later but emphasized the need to take a position now to ensure timely communication with the Legislature.

A member clarified that dental hygiene services fall within the dental scope of practice. They noted that the DHBC has previously issued temporary licenses to military spouses and partners to practice dental hygiene and suggested that the DBC could similarly issue restricted licenses for foreign-trained dentists.

A member added that foreign-trained dentists are dentists, not dental hygienists, and that the DBC is the appropriate agency to determine competency, supervision requirements, and enforce any restricted dental license. They stated that the DHBC regulates dental hygienists, not dentists, and should not be assigned oversight of a dental licensure pathway.

After all discussion and comments took place, no amendments were made to the motion. The original motion was re-stated and voted upon.

Vote: Motion for the Full Board to take a position of opposed unless amended to require the Dental Board of California (DBC) to regulate foreign trained dentists. Passed 5:0:3.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abstain/Absent
Naleni "Lolly" Tribble-Agarwal			Absent.
Julie Elginer	X		
Sonia "Pat" Hansen			Absent.
Sherman King			Absent.
Michael Long	X		
Joanne Pacheco	X		
Sridevi Ponnala	X		
Nicolas Kiet Quach	X		

4. **FULL Agenda Item 4: Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the November 8, 2025, Full Board Meeting Minutes.**

Motion: Member Long moved for the Full Board to suspend the November 8, 2025, Full Board Meeting Minutes agenda item until the next board meeting on Friday and Saturday, March 27-28, 2026.

Second: President Pacheco.

Board Member discussion: None.

Public Comment: JoAnn Galliano stated her support for the motion.

Vote: Motion for the Full Board to suspend the November 8, 2025, Full Board Meeting Minutes. Failed 4:0:4.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abstain/Absent
Naleni "Lolly" Tribble-Agarwal			Absent.
Julie Elginer	X		
Sonia "Pat" Hansen			Absent.
Sherman King			Absent.
Michael Long	X		
Joanne Pacheco	X		
Sridevi Ponnala			Abstain.
Nicolas Kiet Quach	X		

5. FULL Agenda Item 5: Future Agenda Items.

Board Member comment: Member Elginer requested that Assembly Bill (AB) 1952 be added as an agenda item to be addressed in the next Legislative Committee. Dr. Petty responded that the bill will be included in the materials for the March 27-28, 2026, Board Meetings.

Public comment: Jeannette Diaz-Olivera requested the board to provide an update on the HCAI pilot project to allow dental assistants to deliver anesthesia, as well as the data collection being completed on workforce distribution. EO Lum stated that he would provide an update at the upcoming board meeting and will wait to share results until HCAI is able to complete their data collection.

6. FULL Agenda Item 6: Adjournment.

President Pacheco adjourned the Full Board meeting at **12:07 p.m.**