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To: [SLegislation](#)
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Dear Senator Murray:

A common question that comes out during testimony is “What is the average age of a licensed dentist currently in the state of RI”

Based on licensure data collected every two years by the department of health, the average age of a licensed dentist currently practicing in Rhode Island is approximately **62 years old**. The state's dental workforce is notably older than the national average, contributing to a growing shortage of providers. Key demographic insights include:

- **Aging Workforce:** Roughly **56%** of Rhode Island's actively practicing dentists are aged **50 or older**.
- **Retirement Trends:** About **33%** of the state's dentists are now over the age of 60, a significant increase from 21% just 16 years ago. Additionally, 25% are over age 65.
- **Comparison to National Averages:** The average age in Rhode Island is significantly higher than the national average for dentists, which is approximately **49.3 years old** as of recent counts based on data collected from the ADA.
- **Recruitment Challenges:** Rhode Island lacks an in-state dental school and has the lowest dentist-to-population ratio in New England, making it difficult to attract younger practitioners to **replace** those nearing retirement.

Insurance carriers do not license dentists. Rather they have a credentialing process. It is important to distinguish between **licensing** (state-level) and **credentialing** (insurance/facility-level):

- **Licensing:** Focused on initial competency and minimum age (at least 21 years old). In RI, this is a growing concern because the state has no dental school to produce new, young licensees.
- **Credentialing:** The vetting process by insurance companies to verify a dentist's education, work history, and malpractice record, so they can move forward with contracting with the dentist as a provider.

Data from **Delta Dental of Rhode Island**, collected from 2013 to 2023 **(10 year period and 3 years old compared to state data which is updated every 2 years)** highlights a stark contrast between the existing workforce and newly credentialed providers:

- **Existing Workforce:** The average age of a licensed dentist in RI is **62 years old**.
- **Newly Credentialed:** In recent reports, the average age of a newly credentialed dentist in the state was just **35 years old**, with 83% of those being under age 40.
- **Most newly credentialed dentists are recent graduates (younger) which would skew**

the data

- **Comparison of credentialing data to licensure data:** showed that many credentialed dentists during the time period cited by Delta Dental of RI are **no longer licensed to practice in RI.**

Kind regards,
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