



January 24, 2022

**Testimony of Montana Williams
Director, State and Local Public Policy
Chamber of Progress**

**Washington State Legislature
Health Care & Wellness Committee
HB 1950 (Dental Practices)**

Good afternoon Chair Cody and members of the committee,

My name is Montana Williams and I am the Director of State and Local Public Policy for the Chamber of Progress, a center-left tech industry coalition promoting technology's progressive future. Our organization works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps. SmileDirectClub is one of our partner companies, but our partners don't have a vote or veto over our positions.

We urge your committee to **oppose HB 1950**. Teledentistry offers patients safe and convenient access to dental providers through a secure platform – removing transportation barriers, increasing access, reducing costs, and encouraging social distancing.

Teledentistry has provided Washingtonians convenient and necessary access to dental care.

Many residents lack access to dental care due to geographic isolation and workforce shortages. In 2020, the Rural Health Information Hub estimated more than 763 thousand Washingtonians lived in rural communities. As of November 2021, there were 177 dental care Health Professional Shortage Area designations reported in the state.

Teledentistry has brought treatment to these patients anytime, anyday through asynchronous technology by using messaging, image sharing, and videos. HB 1950 would impose obstacles to this care and prevent patients from getting the care they need.

HB 1950 could increase unnecessary health care costs by forcing patients to get treatment they don't need. Teledentistry promotes and provides affordable dental care options for Washington State residents. But HB 1950 mandates services that will inevitably increase the cost of treatment for patients. By forcing patients to receive in-person testing before all treatment, this legislation would prioritize the earnings of practicing doctors over the greater good of Washington residents.

Unfortunately, HB 1950 seems to invoke health and safety as a pretext for reducing competition and preserving the status quo in dental and orthodontic services. This legislation is an attempt by incumbent dental and orthodontic professionals to block lower cost options and foreclose competition from teledentistry providers. But this attempt to block new, less expensive competition

will burden Washingtonians with long travel, taking time off from work, and paying for x-rays and images that may not be necessary for the elected services they wish to have.

Finally, teledentistry allows patients to be treated without the risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Infection rates are skyrocketing around the country. Classrooms have been virtual or hybrid, primary care doctors conduct appointments through apps, and even legislative hearings like this one are being held via Zoom to ensure the utmost safety precautions are being taken. Teledentistry should be treated no differently.

By using teledentistry, practitioners are able to distantly treat, assess, and triage patients without risk of exposure. Dentists that have been using teledentistry to treat patients are held to the same standard of care as any other dental professional in their field. There is no evidence that there has been an issue complying with the standard, and it is unreasonable to believe this will change.

Washington has many residents in need of safe, convenient, affordable, and accessible dental care. HB 1950 would eliminate the options needed to serve these residents. We encourage you to oppose HB 1950.

Thank you.