Open Letter to the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA)

From: Dental Hygienists Association of Alberta

June 20, 2025

Dear Alexandra Sheppard, RDH, President of the CDHA Board,

Today, the Dental Hygienists Association of Alberta (DHAA) and our members read with concern your public support of the College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta's (CDSA) new pilot pathway for internationally trained dentists (ITDs). While we share the commitment to improving access to care across Alberta, particularly in underserved and rural communities, this announcement raises pressing questions about the values and priorities of our national association.

The CDHA has a responsibility to uphold the integrity of the dental hygiene profession and ensure that all individuals providing oral health services are properly trained, qualified, and accountable to the same standards of care. The pilot pathway appears to circumvent the rigorous education, credentialing, and regulatory process that Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs) in Canada are required to complete, which are standards that safeguard patient care and professional competency.

We are asking CDHA for clarity on the following:

1. Does CDHA support the delivery of dental hygiene care by individuals who have not completed accredited Canadian or equivalent dental hygiene training, and who have not passed the same testing required of all Registered Dental Hygienists in Canada, including the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board (NDHCB) exam?
2. Was any formal consultation conducted with any provincial dental hygiene associations, regulatory bodies, or practicing dental hygienists before offering this endorsement?
3. How does this position align with CDHA's stated commitment to evidence-based, high-quality care and professional advocacy?

We are firm in our belief that expanding access to care should never come at the cost of public safety, clinical standards, or professional respect. Our members undergo extensive training to become RDHs, not just in clinical skills, but in health promotion, prevention, and culturally safe, patient-centred care. Any initiative that blurs those lines must be approached with caution,

transparency, and respect for the role of all oral health professionals, especially those most affected.

The CDHA's public endorsement of this program, without broader profession-wide dialogue, undermines the trust many Alberta dental hygienists have in their national body. It also places the burden on provincial associations like the DHAA to advocate alone for the profession's future and for the communities we serve.

The DHAA remains committed to open, respectful dialogue and invites your response to the concerns outlined in this letter. Both our members and the public deserve clarity on where CDHA stands regarding the quality of care Canadians receive, the importance of Canadian dental hygiene education, and the vital role Registered Dental Hygienists play in our health system.

Respectfully,
Laura Wright, RDH
President, Board of Directors
Dental Hygienists Association of Alberta (DHAA)
On behalf of the DHAA Board of Directors and Membership,
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