

## **Celebrating Our Trailblazers: Supporting the Hearts Behind the Smiles**

The dental profession is built on a foundation of care, precision, and dedication to others. As regulators and leaders, we share a common goal: ensuring that every practitioner is empowered to provide the safest, highest quality of care to their communities. The American Association of Dental Boards (AADB) is thrilled to celebrate a beautiful evolution in how we support our dental workforce.

We are proud to recognize the first eight dental boards to be named [Wellbeing First Champions](#): Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama, Idaho Board of Dentistry, Illinois Board of Dentistry, Michigan Board of Dentistry, North Carolina Board of Dentistry, Oregon Board of Dentistry, Pennsylvania Board of Dentistry, and Texas Board of Dentistry.

By collaborating with the ALL IN: Wellbeing First for Healthcare coalition, which is led by the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation and includes the American Dental Association, these boards are leading a nationwide movement to prioritize the health and wellbeing of the dental team, ensuring that our profession remains vibrant and thriving for years to come.

### **A New Standard of Support**

The Wellbeing First Champion Challenge program is [an invitation](#) for boards to take a fresh, supportive look at licensure applications. It's about ensuring our language reflects our commitment to dental professionals' wellbeing.

Historically, the way we asked about health was meant to protect the public, but we've learned that by focusing on current impairment rather than past history, we can create an even safer environment. When we refine our applications to focus on a practitioner's current ability to practice, we send a powerful message: your health matters.

### **Why This Shift is a Win for Everyone**

For board leaders looking to enhance their impact, auditing your licensure language is one of the most rewarding steps you can take. This collaborative approach offers several benefits:

- **Fostering Excellence:** A healthy, supported dentist is a high-performing dentist. By encouraging accessing care when needed, we directly contribute to clinical excellence and patient safety.
- **Building Trust:** Modernizing our applications creates a bridge of trust between the board and the workforce. It positions the board as a proactive partner in the professional journey.

- **Strengthening the Workforce:** In an era where professional burnout is a frequent topic, showing that we value the "person behind the mask" helps retain talented professionals in our field.

### **The Power of the Positive Message**

The most impactful part of becoming a Wellbeing First Champion is the opportunity to communicate this change. It's a chance to tell our dental hygienists, assistants, and dentists: *"We see the incredible work you do, and we are here to support your health and wellbeing."*

Continuous, warm communication ensures that every member of the dental team knows it is not only okay but encouraged to prioritize their mental and emotional wellbeing. When practitioners feel safe seeking care, the entire healthcare ecosystem thrives.

### **Honoring Our Champions**

We extend our deepest gratitude to the first eight boards who have stepped up to this challenge, and those that are in process including the Indiana State Board of Dentistry, Iowa Dental Board, New Jersey State Board of Dentistry, South Carolina Board of Dentistry, Wisconsin Dentistry Examining Board, and Vermont Board of Dental Examiners. You have shown that regulation and compassion go hand-in-hand, and that by caring for our own, we provide the best possible care for our patients.

### **Let's Grow Together**

All boards are [invited](#) to join this growing community of Champions. Auditing and changing your applications is a simple, free, and collaborative process that yields immense rewards for your state's dental community.

Together, we can cultivate a culture where every dental professional feels empowered, supported, and ready to bring their best selves to their patients every single day.