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## **Washington Dentists File No Confidence Petition with Delta Dental**

*Dentists say new leadership approach needed  
at state's largest dental insurance carrier*

**SEATTLE** — Washington dentists are demanding a change in leadership at the helm of the state's largest carrier of dental insurance, Delta Dental (also known as Washington Dental Service [WDS]).

Citing a need for a more transparent, responsive and patient-centered insurance provider, WDS member dentists today will deliver vote of no confidence petitions to the Delta/WDS board of directors. The petition, signed by nearly 1,500 dentists, says Delta members have lost confidence in the leadership of current CEO Jim Dwyer, who has announced plans to retire in January 2019.

The petition requests the Board of Directors to remove Dwyer from his position effective immediately, rather than awaiting his planned retirement date, and name a successor who will focus on core values of patient care, responsive governance and transparency.

"It's important that the WDS Board of Directors understand that their members will not accept a 'business as usual' transition," said one of the petition organizers, Dr. Cynthia Pauley, who also currently serves as the president of the Washington State Dental Association (WSDA).

"Under Mr. Dwyer's tenure, Washington Dental Service, which should be a key partner with our profession in driving better patient outcomes, has instead become a barrier and antagonist to the dental profession," Pauley said. "We see this as a critically important moment for the future of oral health in our state, and a crucial inflection point for the relationship between Washington's dental community and our largest carrier of dental insurance coverage."

The board can make an important first step toward restoring confidence and support among Delta member dentists by listening to their concerns and complying with the petition requests, Pauley added.

Last June, using a process provided for in the Delta bylaws, member dentists requested a special membership meeting to consider proposed bylaws amendments. Nearly 650 Delta members signed the petition in 24 hours, far exceeding the threshold to compel Delta to hold the special meeting.

In September, the resulting special meeting was held, with hundreds of member dentists from across the state attending, and many bringing proxies from their fellow dentists who could not attend. Of the more than 2,300 votes cast, over 91 percent supported the proposed amendments. These changes were primarily designed to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and make Delta more responsive to both patients and members.

The Delta board not only vetoed most of the proposed changes, but it also cancelled the annual membership meeting normally held in the fall. Given these actions, member dentist frustration with WDS continues to grow, said Dr. Chris Delecki, another petition organizer, and WSDA president-elect.

“We believe that substantive and positive change cannot occur until Mr. Dwyer is replaced with a new executive that genuinely treats members as partners and patients as customers,” Delecki said.

“This is a unique opportunity for the board to take positive action that its member dentists believe are necessary to improve the patient and provider focus at WDS — for our patients and our profession.”