



Connecticut State Dental Association

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Legislative Testimony
SB 3 AAC HUSKY Healthcare For All
HB 7375 AAC Health Care Access and Expansion of the HUSKY Program
HB 7322 AAC MEDICAID Managed Care Reform
Human Services Committee, Thursday, March 15, 2007
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Good afternoon. My name is Brian Duchan, and I have been practicing general dentistry in Westport for almost 30 years. I am also President-Elect of the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA). I appreciate you allowing me to talk to you today regarding **SB 3 AAC HUSKY Healthcare For ALL**, **HB 7322 AAC MEDICAID Managed Care Reform**, and **HB 7375, AAC Health Care Access and Expansion of the HUSKY Program**.

HB 7375

Section 3: This bill calls for “fees provided to dental providers by ...managed care organizations shall be equal to the 70th percentile of the normal and customary provider fee, as defined by the National Dental Advisory Service Comprehensive Fee Report. As a recent polling of CSDA members has shown, if the reimbursement rates were raised at least to this level, close to 400 additional dentists would participate in Medicaid for the first time, or be willing to take on additional Medicaid patients if they are already participating.

Section 4: I must raise serious objections, however, and am adamantly **opposed to imposing a dental health services tax**. The dental profession did not cause the lack of oral health care access in Connecticut. In fact, it has indicated its commitment to help solve the dilemma, not to mention the untold amount of pro-bono care and treatment dentists provide on a daily basis. This section of the bill is patently discriminatory, unfair, and quite simply just plain wrong.

The end result of this tax, if enacted would be:

- It would be passed on to the patient. Those who can least afford dental care would be hurt the most
- Dentists considering retirement would do so much quicker...how would this help access?
- Dental students would think long and hard about practicing in another state that is more provider-friendly than CT...how would this help access?

SB 3

Over the years dentists have often been portrayed here at the Capitol as uncaring. I assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. Countless dentists on a day-to-day basis treat underserved patients pro-bono, without ever making a big deal about it. Charity, however, should never be misinterpreted as a health care system.

Like many of my colleagues, I discontinued my participation in the Title XIX program, now known as HUSKY, years ago after intolerable frustration and personal expense. My office still continues to turn away HUSKY patients. In easy to understand terms, the program has not been properly funded, and as you are aware, there has been no significant increase in provider fees in well over 13 years. But now we are at a point where we can fix it and prevent the reoccurrence of provider defections that have contributed to its demise.

Numerous states have proven that if the reimbursement rates are raised to the 70th percentile or above, there will be a large influx of new providers into the system. This level will not make dentists rich, but perhaps it will minimize our losses. If we continue to pay our hygienists, assistants and other staff more per hour than we are reimbursed, the system is destined to fail again.

HB 7322

Section 12: As I have already stated, raising the dental reimbursement rates to the 70th percentile will in fact attract additional dental providers to the Medicaid program.

I thank-you again for allowing me to testify before you today and would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.