

Legislative Testimony
HB 7375, AAC Health Care Access and Expansion of the HUSKY Program
Human Services Committee, Thursday, March 15, 2007
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Good afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Vallano, and members of the Human Service Committee. My name is Ginger Pollack. I am a practicing general dentist in Bolton. 95% of the patients I treat are Medicaid.

Let me start off by saying that I am opposed to the proposed tax in section 4 of HB 7375, An Act Concerning Health Care Access and Expansion of the Husky Program. Imposing a 1% tax on health care professionals that do not participate with the Medicaid program is a detriment to the Medicaid program. I would suspect that dentists will no longer want to practice in our state were this tax to be enacted, which would only worsen the access to care issue here in CT.

My understanding is that the Medicaid program currently offers 10%-50% of the dentists UCR. Office overhead is an average of 55%-85% of the dentists' collected revenue. CT dentists currently have the highest licensure fees in the country. If this additional tax were to be enacted, dentists will be compensating the patient by paying for their treatment as well as performing it by participating with Medicaid. We lose 1% with this tax versus 50%-90%.

If dentists are forced to participate in Medicaid, under the current rates which have not been increased in well over a decade, the office income will be lower and income taxes will be decreased thus inhibiting the state from disbursing more money into the Medicaid program.

The Medicaid program is without a doubt flawed, especially when it comes to dentistry. It does not pay for preventive care like periodontal treatment for the gums and bone but will pay for restorations like fillings and crowns. It's like building a house on quicksand. Why fix the crown of the tooth if the foundation is not stable. In addition, it pays for anterior crowns when posterior occlusion is more important than the ability to incise and the cosmetics of the anterior region. It will cover root canal on posterior teeth but not a crown on posterior teeth to restore the tooth to form and function. It does not cover gold restorations however gold conserves more tooth structure and is most like tooth structure in all of its physical properties. It is healthier for the gingiva as well. Smoking cessation counseling should be a covered benefit as well as oral cancer screenings with Vizilite, a chemoluminescent diagnostic tool for detecting oral cancer in stage 1 and 2 before the eye can see it at stage 3 and 4.

Not all dentists and dental offices are alike. Some practitioners do not have the time to treat any more patients. Some do not have the skills to treat these patients because they do not perform root canals or oral surgery. Some do not perform general dentistry, but only perform cosmetic procedures. Some don't feel comfortable treating children. Some don't have electronic billing or the ability or capacity to manage the benefits of the patient. Some of us do not participate in insurance at all. Some work part-time. A tax is supposed to benefit society. This does not benefit the social good and wrongly singles out those of us who provide the care.

I am disappointed, that with the condition of health care in this state as it is, that this is viewed as an acceptable proposal. Malpractice insurance is outrageous for physicians – why make it unreasonable for any medical

professional to practice in this state? Dentists provide a necessary and valuable service to the citizens of CT. We pay for our own education upwards of \$200K. We pay interest in order to repay those loans. We pay malpractice insurance and income tax.

If this tax proposal were enacted, we would incur a tax while the state develops, but not implements a plan to increase reimbursement and to provide preventive health care. Before increasing reimbursement and before focusing on access to care we need to focus on redefining what services are covered. This proposal is like building a house on quicksand, the foundation is not stable. This proposal is unfair, will simply be passed on to the patient, and will not help to solve the access issue.

Thank-you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.