

Legislative Testimony
HB 7375 AAC Health Care Access and Expansion of the HUSKY Program
SB 3 AAC Increased Access to Health Care Through the HUSKY Program
HB 7322 AAC Medicaid Managed Care Reform
Human Services Committee, Thursday, March 15, 2007
Elias Deros D.M.D.

Dear Human Service Committee Member,

My name is Dr. Elias C. Deros and I am a general dentist in Waterbury and Washington Depot Connecticut. I am also a member of the Connecticut State Dental Association and the current President of the Dental Society of Greater Waterbury. This letter is written in strong support of legislation raising the dental provider reimbursement to the 70th percentile, and strong opposition to Section 4, HB 7375.

As you should be aware at this point Dental Medicaid fees for children have not changed since 1993 and those for adults not since 1989. Yet during this same time period the cost of delivering dental care has increased annually. Office overhead expenses increase annually from supplies to materials to the extreme increase in medical insurance premiums. ***Dentists cannot and should not be made to provide dental care at these reimbursement rates in light of the continued increase cost in delivering dental care.*** Put another way what the state would pay me for a small amalgam filling does not even cover the overhead expense of just seating a patient in my chair. Having said this, I am aware that there needs to be a meeting in the middle. This is the point we have been trying to get across to the legislature. Unfortunately there are some who feel that we are just looking to line our pockets and that since we are doctors we can afford to just do the work for what ever the state will pay. Many of us have student loans for the over 10 years of education needed to become a dentist and then have loans for our practices as well. So it is a great misconception that we are all so financially secure that we afford to just work on a loss for certain patients.

For those of you who do own businesses I would think that you would agree that one cannot work at such a loss and still be able to provide services to the rest of your client base or in our case a patient base. Increasing the Dental re-imbursement rates to the 70th percentile level would allow dentists the ability to see state patients without the negative financial impact on their practice. To date about 400 dentists have pledged to see state patients if the re-imbursement rates were increased to this level. I will be signing up as well and have asked the area dentists in my local society to do the same.

The CSDA is working on a way of quantifying pro bono work done by dentists in this state. It is hard because I am sure that many dentists just do it without thinking of keeping track of these services because it has just become a way of life for us. ***If you were to ask your personal dentist what he or she might do or what some of their colleagues may do I am sure that you would be quite surprised as to the amount of free work that is done by this truly caring group of health care providers.*** I do not see state patients in my practices. However, I am Chief of Dental Services at Cheshire House Rehabilitation Center and I am an attending/clinical instructor in the General Practice Dental Residency Program at Saint Mary's Hospital here in Waterbury. These positions are non-paying but it is a way of me giving back since I cannot afford to treat state patients in my practice. If a resident at Cheshire House needs something I cannot perform there they are sent to Saint Mary's Dental clinic for treatment because of my affiliation and in some cases I have the resident brought to my office in Waterbury and I perform the needed treatment free of charge.

Every hospital based residency program in the state as well as the University of CT School of Dental Medicine (I was in the Class of '93) has part-time private practitioner dentists that volunteer their time in the spirit of dental education and giving something back. Please think carefully about supporting the raising of the dental

reimbursement rates to the 70th percentile for the sake of a population of patients that truly need dental treatment. ***The Governor has proposed 3 billion dollars to education in this state to help feed the minds of our children. Their bodies also need to be nourished and taken care of and I feel that some of that money could be better spent towards increasing these fees so as not to have children going to school in dental pain or having to miss school because of their unmet dental needs.***

I strongly oppose section 4 of HB 7375. All I can say is that we do have a tax on our net income and that is called both state and federal income taxes. I do not understand the wisdom in taxing health care providers for their services with another tax up and beyond our income taxes. However it would appear to me that one group of individuals cannot be singled out for this extra tax. This would mean that all service providers such as lawyers, accountants and any other professional service providers should be included in this bill. I find it hard to believe that with this state being one of the most taxed nationwide that yet another income tax would even be considered.

In addition I do not understand how a bill can be proposed that only attacks dentists such as in this bill. Sec.4. calls for a 1% net income tax on dentists that do not fall within the small parameter listed. Basically stated if the dentist does not see state patients then this tax would be levied. This is truly an attack on the dentists of this state. There is no justification for such a bill and I question the legality of such a tax being singled out for one specific health care provider. The legislature and health care providers are supposed to be working together for the common goal of increased dental health for this underserved population. This bill does nothing more then drive a wedge between all parties involved and just shows the dentists of this state that all we have done thus far and continue to try to do goes un-noticed by the legislature and is portrayed as self serving.

I am proud to be a dentist having both the training and ability to take someone out of pain, rebuild someone's bite, build a smile or change a smile. ***Dentistry is a rewarding career where we have the possibility of improving a person's quality of life every day we walk into our offices.*** I apologize for the length of this statement but feel quite strongly about these issues and do thank you for the opportunity of voicing them to this committee.

Respectfully,

Elias C. Deros, D.M.D.
President, Dental Society of Greater Waterbury, 2006-07