

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. My name is Albert Natelli. I am a practicing dentist in Southington. It is with great sadness that I write this essay to this body of government regarding Raised bill #7375.

I find it unfair and nearly reprehensible that a tax may be or could be imposed on a dentist, or better yet, any health care provider for not participating in a state funded medical/dental plan. While not a lawyer, but a small businessperson, a dentist, I have to ask myself is this taxation without representation as our fore fathers did over 225 years ago with the British tea tax.

I work hard for my earnings and am proud for the volunteer work I do in the dental community, but I do it, volunteer, to give something back, because I have the free will to, and thus choose to do so. I do this quietly, for personal satisfaction, not for recognition. But now as the bill is put forth I have to make it known, I do treat kids for free through my local YMCA and with the Y's help they coordinate with our towns social services department and in the past our united way to make this happen. In addition, I am a volunteer faculty member at The University of Connecticut, School of Dental Medicine. I am there one half day per week in one of the clinics. To me, because I do not accept Medicaid or the HUSKY plan in my office, I feel this is an appropriate way to sever this population, my community, and give back to dentistry.

This bill, if passed as section four is written, may have future dentists choose not to work in the nutmeg state. In addition, other dentists may choose to close their practices and take "early retirement" while others may just close and move to a new state with less stringent rules or laws. Furthermore, what's not to say this population and some lawyers will sue you because someone felt pain; remember doctors (dentists and physicians) are viewed as having "deep pockets" by the malpractice attorneys (i.e. having mal-practice insurance) to tap into. The reimbursement level is too low for me to take on this risk.

While many of you may find this hard to believe, most dentists are not millionaires but they are above average wage earners who are at the mercy their patients insurance companies. As you know, the dentists in this state have an issue with Blue Cross. While

the dentist may have a set fee, the insurance provider may reduce this fee to what the insurance company may allow or deem usual, customary and reasonable. However, this may not be enough to pay the dentist in the end what he or she is comfortable with and needs to live on.

This body is treading on turbulent waters. If passed, what is not to say the legislator in the future will look for funding for other projects by taxing the net revenues on, for example the oil distributors for oil for the fuel assistance, insurers for insurance assistance, how about the lawyers to fund legal aid, banks for no fee checking for those who cannot afford the fees and hair salons for hair cuts and or styles? We need a new play-scape, so let us tax the builders one percent of their quarterly revenues to fund the playground construction.

As long as we are doing this exercise, why not tax the dental insurance companies providing coverage in this state, I am sure they have one percent per quarter that they can afford in the coffer. In addition, why not have the dental supply companies pony up and the dental labs as well. These businesses do not reduce their fees because we treat at a reduced rate or free. In fact, look at the wages paid to the CEO's of some of these companies. As you can see if this door is opened concerning health care i.e. dentistry, what is not to say a floodgate occurs with other industries. Dentists and their practices are small business not conglomerate, so please do not treat us as such.

One may conclude that this bill and most bills relating to dentistry this session, are part of a "fishing expedition" and or "witch hunt" by several of our elected officials, because dentistry became organized (just like the trial attorneys, the insurance lobbies and other organizations). I believe there are dentists who do not want recognition and do good things because they can. I do believe our elected officials have integrity and skill as officials representing all of the people for the betterment of this great state. Thus in the end one has to ask is this just another tax without representation because some thing, or someone thinks dentistry does not do its share? I hope not.

Thank you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours in dentistry,

Albert A. Natelli, DDS