

Legislative Testimony
H.B. 5630 AAC The Establishment Of Licensure For An Advanced
Practice Dental Hygiene Practitioner
Public Health Committee
Monday, March 16, 2009
Suzanna Nemeth, D.M.D.

I have been in private dental practice in Connecticut since 1979. I worked first in Bridgeport for nine years, then in my own practice in Litchfield County beginning in 1986. In Bridgeport 80% of my practice was Medicaid.

I support the expansion of opportunities for dental assistants in Connecticut offices. Thirty-plus states already have these professionals practicing with excellent results both in quality of care and improved access to care.

Right now, a Certified Dental Hygienist can be licensed with two years of education beyond high school, at a cost of about \$60,000. In Connecticut offices and clinics the salaries of these professionals average \$60,000-80,000 per year, and there are more employment opportunities than there are graduates to fill them. There is no other associates' degree worth more in terms of job security and total remuneration.

This legislation presumes individuals would go on from the Dental Hygiene degree to get a college diploma and then a two-year Master's degree. An education like this would cost at least \$200,000, after which these individuals would be required to practice only in a public health setting, in inner city or isolated rural areas, with no guarantee of increased remuneration in these difficult settings, seeing the most difficult patients. At the least these limitations are punitive, and may even prove to be unconstitutional. I am unaware of a comparable limited-practice provider in medicine. This proposed model makes no fiscal sense.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

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