

Legislative Testimony
H.B. 6365 AAC The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30,
2011, And Making Appropriations Therefore
Wednesday, February 18, 2009
Appropriations Committee
Dr. Ronald Linden

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ronald Linden and I am a General Practice dentist in Shelton. I would like to thank-you for the opportunity to testify before you today in regards to the proposed budget cuts made by Governor Rell.

The Connecticut State Dental Association, the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative and the Connecticut Department of Social Services, among others, for many years, have been struggling to ensure access to dental care for those state residents who have not been able to get that access.

While much of the effort has been devoted to the HUSKY program for children younger than 18, considerable efforts have also been made to ensure access to adults on Title 19 as well. The proposal to limit adult Medicaid dental services to emergencies only would greatly undo a decade or more of efforts to provide more comprehensive services.

Dentistry for many years has been treated as a stepchild to medical services. What has been thoroughly established now is that providing dental services is the same as providing any other important medical service. Disease of the oral cavity can affect diabetic and heart conditions. Dental infections can adversely affect pregnant women by causing premature birth.

Further, from a strictly financial point of view, limiting services to emergencies only would almost certainly cost the state more money in the long run. Rather than using dental offices, those with dental emergencies will use the emergency rooms of hospitals.

While emergency rooms may remedy other medical conditions, they can do next to nothing for adult dental problems. The typical treatment is medication for infection and pain and the patient is sent home. The emergency problems then persist and infections can get uncontrolled. I would like to remind you of a boy in Maryland who died of a brain abscess a year or two ago because of an uncontrolled dental abscess.

I recommend to all of you sitting here to attend the CSDA Mission of Mercy, which will take place in New Haven on April 17th and 18th. You will see the desperate need of many people for dental services WHICH THEY CANNOT

AFFORD. But having only 3 days of charitable dental care is not a solution to adult, or child, dental needs.

This state must have a system in place, such as provided by adult Medicaid services, which at least provides basic care. Emergency care only leads to more emergency care. Basic care helps avoid those very emergencies.

To summarize, from every vantage point, whether it be preventing emergencies, saving money, or avoiding life threatening complications, preserving existing dental benefits for this at risk population is the only true sensible thing to do.

Respectfully,

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