



Area Health Education Centers

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Testimony to: Senator, Jonathan Harris
Representative, Betsy Ritter
Members of Public Health Committee

In Support of: Raised Bill 5630

Submitted by: Vani Anand, MPH, CHES
Oral Health Care Coordinator
Southwestern Area Health Education Center

Sen. Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

As a public health professional working in the capacity of oral health care coordinator, to increase access to quality and affordable oral health care for underserved populations in Bridgeport and Stratford, I strongly urge your support to pass:

HB 5630. THE ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LICENSURE FOR AN ADVANCED PRACTICE DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONER.

The time is right to pass this measure now.

Connecticut has a population of 3.4 million, and oral disease is a significant public health problem. CT's most vulnerable populations, including senior citizens (13.5%), children (23.4%), racial and ethnic minorities (24%), persons living under the federal poverty level (8.1%) and the uninsured (10%) are especially impacted by burden of oral disease, due to lack of access to quality and affordable dental care (CT Dept of Public Health, 2007).

Connecticut has 2,591 professionally active dentists (U.S. Census, 2000) with a ratio of practicing dentists to overall population of 1:1,514. CT's dentists are not evenly distributed in the state to serve the needs of our population. Windham county's dentist to population ratio in year 2000 was 1:2,728; double that of Fairfield county's 1:1,277. About 12% of towns in CT have no dentists and almost 45% of towns have 5 or fewer dentists (CT Dept of Public Health, 2007).

While CT's population is projected to increase in the next 15 years, the net loss of dental workforce is expected to be 15%. This will only exacerbate the increasing difficulty vulnerable populations are presently experiencing in accessing quality and affordable dental care.

Finally, with the recent proposed budget cuts by the Connecticut Legislature restricting Medicaid Dental coverage for adults to only emergency care; and requiring pre-authorization for non-emergency procedures, the oral health of CT's vulnerable populations is in further jeopardy.

The Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner patterns the existing and successful model of the APRN. Licensing advance practice dental hygiene practitioners would considerably alleviate the growing problem of affordable dental care access that Connecticut faces today.

Please support this bill to allow dental hygienists to advance their training and education and provide the much needed service to our communities and neighbors statewide.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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