

Legislative Testimony
HB 5630 AAC The Establishment Of Licensure For An Advanced
Dental Hygiene Practitioner
Public Health Committee
Monday, March 16, 2009
Dr. David Fried

Good afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am testifying in opposition to this bill. I have been a general practitioner for over 20 years and practice in Wallingford, Ct. I am also retired from the Connecticut Army National Guard, having served as the State Dentist, advising the Adjutant General on Dental matters and providing necessary dental examinations to our service members, and additionally served for three years on active duty with the United States Air Force.

I would like to speak directly about the Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA) portion of this bill because I feel that this is the most efficient method to improve access to care and lower the cost of primary dental care. While in the military, I observed, trained and monitored the activities of dental assistants who had been through a short but intensive training course. The EFDAs have been practicing in The Army, Navy and Air Force for over 30 years, some able to fill and carve amalgam restorations, some doing radiographic surveys and others making temporary crowns. Most important, they were the primary providers of preventative care. EFDAs have been practicing successfully in over 30 states.

These EFDAs provided top-quality dental cleanings, fluoride treatments and dietary counseling to military members, their spouses and their children. The care was efficient, and it was directed toward the correct level of care, that being *preventative* dentistry. These prophylactic technicians were able to provide excellent care under the supervision of Dentists. Although they did not have the same level of academics as our civilian hygienists, they had enough training to complete the mission. Preventative care has been the most successful modality in medicine and dentistry in reducing costs and providing a lifetime of benefits. Children miss school, adults miss work. Missing front teeth reduces self-esteem, and prevents people from getting white-collar jobs and from being in front of the public. Teaching patients oral hygiene, scaling and polishing and applying fluoride are relatively easy procedures.

This legislature should really look at how to help Dentists provide care to children and young adults in a more cost-effective manner before corrective surgical care is needed. We should all be looking at how to increase the number of providers, especially in the preventative sector. We can do this effectively, inexpensively and not reduce the quality of care by promoting the EFDA half of this legislation.

The other half of this bill, which I feel should not go forward, is the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) portion. It really creates another level of practitioner which is not needed in Dentistry in Connecticut. It is unproven, and does not exist in any State except Alaska, where minimal care is better than no care. Developing an ADHP will not increase access to care because these practitioners will be taken away from the preventative sector and placed in the corrective surgical sector of Dentistry. I cannot emphasize enough that the prevention of Dental disease is the most cost effective method to improve the general health and welfare of Connecticut's citizens. We should be looking at how to increase the number of providers in the prevention of cavities and gum disease. Imagine how much happier a child is after a cleaning appointment rather than after having a tooth pulled. Hygienists should really be putting their efforts forward to prevent the need for treatment.

Connecticut does not need the ADHP concept. At this time it is an unproven idea being promoted by a small percentage of those who are active in the field of Dentistry. We should be looking to venues that have a track record, the EFDA component.

I would like to see this Public Health committee split this bill into two halves- promote expanded functions for dental assistants and reject the advanced dental hygiene practitioner proposal.

Sincerely,

David L. Fried, DMD
329 Main St.
Yalesville, CT 06492
(203) 265-7118
moguldoc@sbcglobal.net