

Testimony from: Jody Bishop-Pullan, RDH, BS
Submitted to: Senator, Jonathan Harris; Representative, Elizabeth Ritter; and the
Public Health Committee Members,
In Support of: Proposed Bill # 5630

My name is Jody Bishop-Pullan. I am a Registered Dental Hygienist, employed by the City of Stamford Department of Health and Social Services as a dental case manager. I speak in favor of HB 5630 because it would expand access to oral health care for thousands of low-income families who seek healthcare from public health facilities. My position with the Health Department is to oversee the oral health program and to ensure children receive preventive and restorative care. Currently, I see too many patients for the number of providers. Wait times for appointments are long and children go without treatment for long periods of time. Last year, from our Stamford school program alone, we referred 1187 children who had dental decay. 44% of them received treatment by the end of the school year. In our clinic, we saw 111 of those children in the one day per week we are able to afford to provide treatment. Many children required multiple appointments to complete. So you see my frustration. How do we justify letting 66% of children in need, walk around with disease that impacts their ability to eat meals and learn in school.

Prevention and early intervention are key to decreasing the risk of infections and occurrence of more complex dental problems as well as decreasing the cost of oral health care. The ideal setting to provide services to low-income families is in schools where children are, neighborhood community clinics where families live or mobile clinics that travel to the clients. These sites reduce barriers to care such as transportation and time away from work and school. Yet we know our school based clinics and public health facilities operate on shoestring budgets and funding is scarce.

An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner who delivers limited treatment services is a cost effective way to accomplish that. Dentists willing to work in Public Health are hard to find and expensive to hire. I see the ADHP as an affordable alternative for public health facilities to deliver care. They would be able to expand the number and type of services offered to more clients and will do so with reasonable cost to the facility.

Some may offer what seem to be reasonable solutions to my problem-dentists volunteering in the schools or opening offices for one day of free services each year. They do not understand the incredible need for children and their families to have the continuity of care from a provider they know and trust. These are band aid approaches that do not address the systemic change our healthcare system needs and our residents deserve.

Health care reform is on the minds of the people, our legislators and our President. It's time we stopped doing things the same way and expecting different results. It's time to offer solutions that will truly reform the delivery of oral healthcare in the way the use of APRN's known as nurse practitioners provide primary healthcare. Please support HB # 5630 and increase access for our most vulnerable citizens.

Submitted by;



Jody Bishop-Pullan, RDH
16 Thomes Street
Norwalk, CT 06853