



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE March 2, 2010

Jennifer Filippone, Health Care Systems Branch 860-509-7590

House Bill 5355 - An Act Concerning an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program

The Department of Public Health provides the following information and would like to share our concerns regarding House Bill 5355.

The provisions of this bill would expand the scope of dental hygiene practice for licensed dental hygienists who have graduated from a master's program in advanced dental hygiene practice. Expanded functions would include but are not necessarily limited to administration of local anesthesia, diagnosis of oral disease and conditions, and prescribing, dispensing and administering medications. House Bill 5355 would require the Commissioner of Social Services in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Health to establish a pilot program for advanced dental hygiene practitioners to provide these expanded services within a public health facility pursuant to a written collaborative agreement with a licensed dentist.

To be considered an advanced dental hygiene practitioner, a licensed dental hygienist would be required to present documentation to the Department of Public Health of having graduated from a master's degree program in advanced dental hygiene from an institution of higher learning that is accredited by the Department of Higher Education. However, the bill does not require the licensed hygienist to pass a competency examination or maintain continued competency related to advanced dental hygiene practice similar to that which is required for other midlevel health practitioners such as physician assistants or advanced practice registered nurses. Additionally, the bill does not include requirements for education, training and competency demonstration related specifically to the administration of local anesthesia and prescriptive authority.

The Department would also like to highlight the following additional concerns:

- The bill requires the dental hygienist to submit evidence of completion of a master's degree to the Department, but it is not clear whether the Department would be required to review and approve the coursework.
- The bill does not address the frequency in which collaborative agreements between advanced dental hygiene practitioners and dentists would be reviewed. The Department recommends that such agreements be reviewed on at least an annual basis.
- It should be noted that controlled substances can only be prescribed by practitioners who hold a controlled substance permit issued by the Department of Consumer Protection. This bill does not authorize the Department of Consumer Protection to issue or establish eligibility requirements to issue controlled substance permits to advanced dental hygiene practitioners.
- The bill does not make it clear that disciplinary action can be taken against an advanced dental hygiene practitioner's dental hygiene for practice related issues, nor is clear that action can be taken against a dentist's license related to the collaborative practice agreement.
- The bill requires the pilot program to begin on or before 7/1/2011. The Department has confirmed with the Department of Higher Education that there are no advanced dental hygiene programs that have been approved in Connecticut. As such, there are no programs that would graduate students before July 2011.

The Department of Public Health has worked with the Public Health Committee as well as interested stakeholders concerning this proposal in the past and would be pleased to continue to do so moving forward.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

Phone:



Telephone Device for the Deaf: (860) 509-7191
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # _____
P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134

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