

**Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
HB 5452 AAC THE PROVISION OF VOLUNTEER HEALTH CARE SERVICES ON A TEMPORARY
BASIS.**

**Friday, March 12, 2010
Jonathan B. Knapp D.M.D.**

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health committee, my name is Dr. Jonathan Knapp and I have been practicing dentistry for 20 years in the town of Bethel. I currently serve as the Immediate Past President of the Connecticut State Dental Association. I also serve on the board of the Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach, which oversees the CT Mission of Mercy Project. Please accept my regrets for not being able to provide oral testimony. Unfortunately, the 2010 MOM Project is taking place today in Middletown and I am unable to get away to come to Hartford. However, I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony in support of HB 5452.

Volunteer events such as Mission of Mercy and the various "mini-MOM" events that are being held around the state, have become an important facet in the multi-pronged approach that is being implemented by Connecticut's dental professionals to address the problem of access to appropriate oral health care for the underserved in our state. The first CTMOM project back in 2008, made Connecticut the seventh state in the country to hold a MOM project and the first state in New England to do so. Since that time, MOM projects have come to fruition in many additional states. As the first state in New England, it is anticipated that Connecticut will become a MOM "hub" for the eastern seaboard. If you have witnessed these events, you have seen the massive and complex logistics that must be addressed to ensure a maximally successful project. The first MOM project in our state was able to provide care to over 1200 of Connecticut's neediest citizens in two days only because dentists from our state were allowed to participate in MOM events in Virginia and Colorado. Our dentists were allowed to provide direct patient care, became bitten by the MOM "bug", and were inspired to bring MOM to CT. More importantly, their participation provided more care to the underserved in those states. This year we expect to treat over 2000 patients and provide \$1 million in free dental care in two days in Middletown.

As a MOM hub, Connecticut would serve a number of functions. Since these events utilize massive amounts of portable dental equipment, it is impractical for organizers in every state to purchase their own units with chairs, lights compressors, suction units etc. Our group has already raised money and purchased equipment that will be utilized on a rotating basis as MOM events are scheduled in other states. We are also the most experienced group in the northeast corridor at sponsoring these events and will serve as a "MOM squad" as other states come on board. These factors make Connecticut the "go to" state in the region for others looking to replicate this very successful model. Allowing practitioners from other states to provide care during our events will allow us to continue to increase the capacity of these events here in Connecticut, and will provide for the expansion of these volunteer events to provide care to new regions. Enacting the same provisions for practitioners in other professions will allow us to expand these projects to provide a much broader range of services, with additional care provided in other specialties of healthcare, to those who would not otherwise receive it.

In fact, we already have dentists who come from other states (but they can only observe), and we have received calls from others who are willing to come but will only make the trip if they are allowed to actively participate.

President Obama has issued a call to all Americans to increase volunteerism. What an ideal way to facilitate the answering of that call, by providers who are eager to respond.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to support HB5452

In closing, I would like to again thank the Committee for allowing me to provide testimony today, and would be happy to make myself available at any time should you have questions.

Sincerely,

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