

Legislative Testimony
Human Services Committee
HB 5355 AAC An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program
Tuesday, March 2, 2010
William A. MacDonnell, D.D.S.

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services committee, my name is Bill MacDonnell. I am a dentist anesthesiologist in private practice, who has been providing sedation/anesthesia for Connecticut dental patients since 1978. I have worked with more than 200 dentists. I have been teaching at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine and providing Health Center patients sedation/anesthesia pro bono since the early 1980's. I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony regarding HB 5355.

I am opposed to HB 5355 because it does not address the real issues of accessing dental care in Connecticut. This Bill creates a new dental provider. There is no data that ADHPs will increase access to dental care or reduce the cost of providing dental care. The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) evaluates all dental provider-training programs. Yet CODA will not accredit the new ADHP training programs. The Connecticut Board of Higher Education will have to reinvent the wheel in order to accredit this new dental provider. How much will it cost the State to accredit the ADHP programs?

According to UConn's Dr. Howard Bailit's research the ADHP cannot provide dental care at less cost than a dentist. The Advanced Dental Hygiene Provider (ADHP) program requires four (4) years of undergraduate education; a two-year masters program and a year of internship for a total of seven (7) years. Dental education is a total of eight (8) years (4 undergraduate and 4 years of dental school). The question is why wouldn't one spend one more year and become a dentist and provide the full spectrum of dental care?

There are two four-year dental hygiene undergrad programs in Connecticut. The University of Bridgeport (UB) (\$43,180/year - \$172,720/4 years) and the University of New Haven (\$43,774/year - \$175,096/ 4 years) not including books spending money, inflation, etc. Graduate education in Cell Biology (without living expenses, books, etc.) at the University of New Haven is \$40,227/year (\$80,454 for two years). ADHP programs will be much more costly than Cell Biology because the training will have to be similar to that of a dental student if ADHPs will be doing fillings, extractions, pulpotomies (root canals), orthodontics etc. Private dental schools are about

\$85,000/year with living expenses (\$340,000/ four years). One has to assume that UB and the University of New Haven will be similar costs (\$160,000+ for two years).

One of my UConn dental residents finished her residency with a student loan debt of \$210,000 after being an UConn undergrad and dental student.

It is my understanding that there are more than ten (10) dental schools soon to be opened nationally. Most dental schools graduate at least 50 dentists/year. Those dental schools will have an impact by increasing the number of dentists by 500+ dentists annually.

We do not know what the real need for dental providers is in Connecticut. To the best of my knowledge there have been no studies regarding Connecticut dental manpower needs. Instead of creating a new provider (ADHP) based on no data it would be better to commission a study to identify the real dental manpower needs in Connecticut. Based on that data the State could determine any changes or increases in dental manpower. For example if the study demonstrated that Connecticut needed 10 dentists or 10 hygienists Connecticut could offer scholarships similar to those granted by the military which pay tuition and costs and a stipend and the student would owe the state year for year. Dentists and hygienists would be paid the same as a military dentists and hygienists when they work for the State. This method would address the dental needs of Connecticut's patients.

I wonder why this ADHP pilot program would be located in Hartford? Recently, several Hartford Dental Society dentists provided pro bono dental care in the North End of Hartford for needy children. It was very confusing to be told that the Hartford public school dental hygiene department was not supportive of informing the parents of Hartford school children that pro bono dental care was available for their children. If there is an access to dental care problem in Hartford one would assume that the Hartford public school dental hygienists would be supportive of pro bono dental care program(s)?

Connecticut needs to study the current dental manpower needs in order to increase access to dental care. Creating a new dental provider to address access to dental care without knowing what Connecticut's real dental needs are is not the appropriate way to use taxpayer dollars and address

the problem. It would be the same as saying there is a traffic problem in New Haven and building a monorail without studying what the traffic problem and needs are.

The PEW Report gave Connecticut a great rating for dental care. We have more than a thousand dentists who have signed up to provide dental care for the needy. We need to identify a better system of how to get patients to take advantage of the dentists willing to provide dental care not create a new unproven dental provider.

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

Respectfully submitted,

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