

Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
HB 5475 AAC Dental Care For Nursing Home Residents
Friday, March 12, 2010
Lawrence J. Singer, DDS

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health committee, my name is Dr. Lawrence Singer. I am a dentist from Wallingford having practiced there for forty six years.

I thank the Public Health Committee for allowing me to provide this written testimony in support of HB 5475, an Act Concerning Dental Care for Nursing Home Residents. I have had a career-long interest in issues that involve seniors, the elderly and those who require special health care services. I am an active participant in programs that identify the health care needs of the senior-population of both the State and my local community of Wallingford.

I serve as a Wallingford Town Council appointee to the Committee on ageing, and represent the Council at the Wallingford Senior Center. I also serve on the Taskforce on Dental Care for the Elderly, a Connecticut Department of Public Health taskforce that deals with access to care, quality of care, and assessment programs which plumb the level of dental care need within the senior population of Connecticut. I am Chairman of the Connecticut State Dental Association's Committee on Dental Care Issues of the Elderly.

Moving to HB 5475, I would applaud the intent and direction that the Bill takes in protecting the health and welfare of its citizens who might find themselves resident in the many types of care-giving facilities within the State, particularly Nursing Homes. Both of my parents were residents of a nursing home prior to their deaths. On balance, the care they both received there was excellent.

HB 5475, however, deals with the safety issues one might address as a nursing home resident seeks transportation and monitoring throughout a visit to a dentist. In my 46 years of practice here in Connecticut, I find the level of care of patients being transported for dental care to vary between excellent, provided by licensed ambulance companies, and sub-standard, provided by attendants and drivers for nursing homes as part of the resident's service agreement. I use the word, sub-standard, advisedly since I am not aware that there are standards in place for such an issue. Perhaps HB 5475 will focus on this in due course.

As access-to-care is an ongoing issue here in Connecticut; so is the issue of barriers-to-care. Many dental offices are not *Handicap-Friendly*, and require certain transportation-attendant skill sets in negotiating handicapped patients throughout the dental visit both pre and post operatively.

I urge the Committee to support HB 5475

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

Sincerely,

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