

**Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly, Human Services Committee
In Support of
Proposed H.B. No. 5616
AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE
PRACTITIONERS**

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Diane Dimmock. I thank you for giving me this exciting opportunity to submit testimony to you today in support of **Proposed House Bill 5616, *An Act Concerning Licensure for an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner***. I am a Registered Dental Hygienist in the State of Connecticut, and prior to retiring 4 years ago, worked for 25 years in the Capital City (Hartford) Public School System (CCPSS), the last 4 years as the Coordinator of Health Services. I spent my entire career working toward better access to quality health care for the underserved pediatric population in one of the most impoverished cities in the US.

The dentists that I worked with in the CCPSS are outstanding, and I was privileged to work with them, as they provide excellent dental treatment to the children. However, it was always (and continues to be) difficult to attract and retain dentists in the school-based program where salaries could not compete with the private sector. As a result, there were never enough dentists to go around and sadly, too much decay went untreated. What is needed is an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner who could provide much of the routine dental restorative treatment in public health facilities. This is an exciting opportunity to move in a positive direction in healthcare. What has become standard in the medical profession – midlevel providers *such as nurse practitioners* must become a part of the dental profession.

As the Coordinator of Health Services for the Capital City Public School System, I was responsible for the school nurses, as well as the school-based medical and dental clinic services. During my tenure with the CCPSS, I witnessed the transition of the use of nurse practitioners into school health and into school-based medical clinics. In fact, Hartford Schools was one of the first school districts in the US to send interested school nurses to the University of Colorado in Denver to be educated as School Nurse Practitioners in the 1970's. These Nurse Practitioners became pioneers in being some of the first midlevel providers, and they began to provide critical

care to Hartford’s kids. While today we can barely remember the time there were no nurse practitioners, it was revolutionary at the time this first happened.

In an age when the cost of healthcare is at a national crisis stage, it is simply common sense to be able to use the most cost-effective methods of providing such care. As you can see from the table here, it cost **38% more** to employ a dentist than a midlevel provider*. The savings are substantial. Midlevel providers make sense and that needs to happen in dentistry just as it did in medicine.

**(Table included with data, from Hartford Federation of School Health Professionals Bargaining Unit)*

	2006/2007 Salary	% Inc. from RDH to Midlevel	% Inc. from Midlevel to DDS
RDH / RN (Bachelor’s)	\$ 51,491	33.98%	
Midlevel / APRN (Master’s)	\$ 68,988		37.90%
Dentist / DMD / DDS (Doctoral)	\$ 95,136		

As is simply stated by the ADHA*, *the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner is an answer to the oral health crisis in America by safely providing cost-effective, diagnostic, preventive, therapeutic and restorative services directly to the un-served public.* (*American Dental Hygienists’ Association: Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner Fact Sheet, 2010)

In closing, I want to urge this committee to pass Proposed HB 5616 and allow Connecticut to become a leader in the United States to improve quality and access to dental care.

Thank you again! And please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

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