

Legislative Testimony
Human Services Committee
HB5616 AAC Licensure Of Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioners
Tuesday, March 1, 2011
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Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services committee, my name is Doug Keck and I have been practicing dentistry for 19 years as a pediatric dentist in the towns of New Haven and Madison. I also teach in the pediatric dental residency program at Yale- New Haven Hospital and am the Connecticut State Leader of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry/Office of Head Start Dental Home Initiative which is a federal contract to provide “dental homes” for all Head Start children in the United States. I also serve on the Department of Social Services Dental policy Advisory Council which has oversight responsibilities of the State’s dental Medicaid system. I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to you in opposition to HB 5616.

I recently achieved a Masters degree in Higher Education in 2008, and my reflection and opposition to the proposed legislation comes from the educational standpoint as well as from the standpoint of a private-practicing dentist. Although HB5616 has very little specific language, this leads me to believe that the language will be similar to the 2010 Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner Bill HB 5355. HB5355 proposed a twelve month pilot program to begin “on or before July 2011”, however, the licensed dental hygienist needs to present documentation that the hygienist has “graduated from a Masters degree program in advanced dental hygiene practice from an institution of higher learning.” The math, unfortunately, did not “add” up. Also, all programs that offer degrees in higher education arena must go through stringent accreditation processes, which can take years and a lot of money. I am concerned about access to medical as well as dental health care for Connecticut’s citizens, but hope HB5616 is truly not to expand the scope of practice of a dental hygienist.

I teach at the pediatric dental residency program at Yale-New Haven Hospital which is a two year, post dental school graduation residency that specializes in treating only children. The greatest amount of learning that these residents achieve in two years is in the behavior management of children and adolescents as well as those with special needs. It is difficult to believe that a two year Masters program for a dental hygienist would be acceptable in teaching the medical and oral health management of the most vulnerable citizens in Connecticut.

Lastly, I am concerned with the language that states that the “Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner” would “increase access to care in public health settings.” The CT State Dental Association and the CT Dental Health Partnership have recruited more than 1,100 providers to treat “Husky” patients across Connecticut. I have attended meetings representing Head Start, Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Pediatric Dentists of Connecticut. At all of these meetings collaboration between the Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, school based health services, the dental school, the community health centers, the federally qualified health centers, dentists and dental auxiliaries has occurred in providing access to care to the at-risk population in our State. It seems we are making progress in this difficult task without adding mid-level providers that have no outcome metrics, but have a cost to the State associated with them.

Please let our collaborative efforts continue in making the progress that we have made thus far without adding confounding factors to the mix. I respectfully ask you to reject HB5616 at this time and to work

with the dental profession in studying and forming the best “evidence-based” solution to the access to care problem in the State of Connecticut.

In closing, I would like to again respectfully thank the members of the Human Services committee for allowing me to submit this testimony. If you should have any questions I will do my best to make myself available at your convenience.

Sincerely,

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