

ADHP Curriculum Testimony

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

As Dean of the University of Bridgeport – Fones School of Dental Hygiene I am here to speak in support of the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) as proposed in HB 5615. The ADHP would serve as a new member of the oral health care team, working as a mid-level provider akin to the nurse practitioner in medicine, to bring oral health care services to the residents of Connecticut who are currently unable to access oral health care services. The ADHP represents a meaningful effort to address the oral health care crisis in our country.

The ADHP would be educated at the Master's degree level, which is the academic standard for mid-level providers in medical fields. Mid-levels like the nurse practitioner, physicians' assistants, nurse midwives, and physical therapists have been in practice for years and have made a significant positive impact on the delivery of medical care. Mid-levels in oral health care are not a new concept—currently over 40 countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK have mid-level oral health care providers in place.

This oral health team member will be licensed, educated, and trained to administer preventive and select operative therapies. In addition to clinical skills, ADHPs would be educated in health promotion, disease prevention, case management, practice management, quality assurance, and evidence-based practice and ethics. ADHPs would be trained to work with a diverse patient population in a variety of public health settings designed to facilitate care in easily accessible locations.

The University of Bridgeport is committed to developing and implementing a master's degree program that will educate and graduate qualified candidates for this new mid-level oral health practitioner. The proposed 18-24 months curriculum allows for the acquisition of competencies that build upon the fundamental knowledge and skills achieved at the baccalaureate level. Pre-requisite requirements for the program include a bachelor of science in dental hygiene or other health related field and dental hygiene licensure (including local anesthesia) equating to not less than 1000 hours of clinical dental hygiene practice. Upon successful completion of the program, a master's degree in advanced dental hygiene practice will be granted by the University of Bridgeport, a Board of Governors of the Connecticut Department of Higher Education accredited institution.

The rigorous curriculum will prepare practitioners to address special oral health needs of priority populations including children, elderly, adults, and those with special needs who will be served in public health settings. Moreover, the ADHP will hold an academic credential comparable to other practitioners in the primary care marketplace; e.g., nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, physician assistants, and physical therapists. As a graduate level professional, the ADHP will exhibit refined analytical skills, broad-based perspectives, and enhanced abilities to integrate theory, research and practice. The ADHP will employ sound clinical judgment and evidence-based decision making to determine within their scope of practice when patients can be treated, when they require further diagnosis or treatment by a dentist, or referral to another other healthcare provider.

The educational framework is similar to that of a dental curriculum in areas where similarities in scope of practice occur, thereby providing comparable patient and public safety. Clock hours are similar in course work, lecture content, laboratory requirements and clinical experiences for those procedures on mid level practice. The similarities in clock hours are shown here on a table from data published by an American Dental Association

biennial report devoted to the instruction, laboratory, and patient care activities at all 56 United States dental schools.

Average Clock Hours	Dental School	ADHP
Dental Clinical Sciences	3,557	3,237
Community Based Patient Care	132	400
General and Oral Pathology	198	201
Periodontics	301	314
Pharmacology	85	102
Oral Diagnosis and Treatment Planning	202	111
Dental Public Health and Special Needs	121	253
Dental Emergencies	70	62
Anesthesiology/Pain Control	57	54
Total Average Clock Hours	4,723	4,734

The ADHP curriculum fully prepares the practitioner to perform what is required of the position.

The University of Bridgeport – Fones School of Dental Hygiene has a strong history of collaboration with dental school faculty and dental public health clinicians and administrators. Dentists will be actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the advanced dental hygiene practitioner curriculum.

In addition to the didactic education, the ADHP curriculum requires a residency program and completion of a comprehensive competency based clinical examination. Continued competency must be achieved throughout the process of the program. During the required residency, residents will work closely with dentists and other dental team members.

The University of Bridgeport is not the only university to develop a curriculum for advanced dental hygiene practice. In 2009, the Minnesota State Legislature passed legislation establishing a midlevel oral health provider in state statute - enabling students who are educated under the ADHP model to become licensed to practice. A Master's degree education program at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota began in fall 2009 to educate dental hygienists to practice as mid-level providers. The first class is slated to graduate and commence practice in May 2011.

In closing, I urge the Human Services Committee to support the support HB 5616. The bill would help make oral health care more accessible to those currently disenfranchised from the oral health system, helping reduce dental disease in the State of Connecticut.