

**UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT**

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN**

**TUNXIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**LINCOLN COLLEGE OF NEW ENGLAND**

February 28, 2011:

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

The **four dental hygiene school administrators** in Connecticut are pleased to offer its support for the establishment of an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) in Connecticut. We understand that the Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) is soliciting legislative support for ADHP policy. Specifically, ADHP programs will prepare practitioners to address the special oral health needs of priority populations including children, the elderly, and those with special needs.

Access to oral health services continues to be a serious problem in the State of Connecticut. While positive actions have been taken in recent years such as the passage of higher Medicaid provider rates in 2007, more needs be done to bring oral health care services to underserved residents of the state. One such strategy entails the introduction of a new oral healthcare practitioner, the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner or ADHP (to be credentialed by the American Dental Hygienists' Association). This practitioner is akin to the nurse practitioner on the medical side of healthcare.

The development of the advanced dental hygiene practitioner will increase utilization of finite health care resources and will enable more patients to be seen, diagnosed and treated for oral health issues at a lower cost to the taxpaying public. The ADHP proposal is the next key step in the continuing effort to expand oral health care services in Connecticut.

An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner would practice in settings, such as community health centers, school-based health clinics, Head Start or pre-school programs. The demand for oral health services is particularly acute in such venues and the advanced dental hygiene practitioner can help fill the need in underserved communities.

In response to the Surgeon General's National Call to Action, we believe that the ADHP will improve access to oral health care. Dental hygienists are prevention specialists who are uniquely qualified and positioned to meet the oral health needs of the underserved. Dental hygienists can detect signs and symptoms of many life-threatening diseases, educate patients to develop oral health care treatment plans, and serve as an invaluable pipeline for referring those who need the care of a dentist. As an advanced degree prepared provider, the ADHP will provide clinical services to underserved populations and case management and oral health counseling to help people lead healthier lives.

The above letter was drafted and signed by the dental hygiene administrators in 2008.

Sincerely,

*Susan Sprowson*

Susan Sprowson, RDH, MS  
Dental Hygiene Program Director  
Briarwood College

*Meg Zayan*

Meg Zayan, RDH, MPH, EdD  
Dean, Fones School of Dental Hygiene  
University of Bridgeport

*Mary Bencivengo*

Mary Bencivengo, RDH, MS  
Division Director Allied Health  
Tunxis Community College

*Sandra D'Amato - Palumbo*

Sandra D'Amato-Palumbo, RDH, MS  
Director Dental Hygiene  
University of New Haven