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**Legislative Testimony
Insurance Committee
SB 16 AAC Standards For Health Care Provider Contracts (Section 5)
Tuesday, January 25, 2011
Al Natelli, DMD**

Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and Esteemed Committee Members, my name is Dr. Al Natelli and I have been practicing dentistry for 15+ years in the town of Southington. Last year the Senate voted unanimously in favor of this bill which with hours remaining in session stalled and died in the House. This was most unfortunate however I do understand the reasons why this occurred. This year I am supplying you with my written testimony supporting this piece of legislation and I hope you can support it too.

This bill will stop insurers from setting fees for services they don't even cover; it's fundamentally unfair for insurers to dictate fees for services not under contract. In addition it will stop unfair price-fixing of non-covered services by insurance companies. If Dentists can't fix prices, then why should big insurers have so much power – especially since they, unlike dentists, have a minimal history of working to help patients?

This bill will also stop the inappropriate intrusion of insurers into the dentist-patient relationship. Dentists and patients should determine the course of treatment – not insurance companies. Dentists should be able to charge a reasonable fee for services rendered – not coerced into accepting a lower fee so insurance companies can pad their profit margins.

In addition it will prevent insurance companies from dictating how dentists manage their small businesses. As any small business operator in CT can attest, unfair policies like this just add another burden for dental offices already struggling in this economy.

The National Council of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) has identified the practice of setting fees for non-covered services as being unfair and has approved language to correct this insurance company marketing ploy. I urge you to follow their example and pass Section 5 of SB16. In addition, Rhode Island and Oregon have passed similar legislation and they have been signed by their respective governors.

Finally, we all know how difficult it is to do business here in Connecticut; it is well known businesses are legislated to the nth degree in our great state. Dentists are small business in our state, employing several people, paying property taxes and payroll taxes as well as complying with several laws on the books that can be construed as small business inhibitors. I know that inhibiting small businesses is not your intent, especially now. Kindly allow us the privilege to practice as we see fit and give us the opportunity to survive in this economic environment as small businesses in our Nutmeg State. Thus I urge you to support this bill, specifically the language in Section 5 out of your committee with a positive recommendation.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony. If you have any questions I would be more than happy to address them with you.

Sincerely,

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