

Legislative Testimony
HB 6549AAC THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S
OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO SCOPE OF
PRACTICE DETERMINATIONS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS.

Public Health Committee

Friday, March 11, 2011

Bruce Tandy, D.M.D.

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Bruce Tandy. I am a private practice general dentist in Vernon and Coventry who treats Medicaid children and adults, participates in the Home by One program, and am one of the leads on the Mission of Mercy project. I am also the Past President of the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA) representing over 2400 dentists and members of the dental team who communicate, educate, advocate, and collaborate on oral health issues and provide care to the citizens of Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you in favor of HB 6549.

Access to oral health care for those individuals who do not have insurance or the financial means to seek treatment has been problematic since I entered practice 30 years ago. We have learned over that time period that oral health and general health is intimately linked to the overall well being of the citizens of Connecticut. A process to determine if scope of practice changes will improve access to care before changes are legislated is a major step forward.

As long as I can remember, scope of practice issues have existed in dentistry. The annual debate amongst dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants across the country and in Connecticut has been emotional between the dental team members and within the dental profession itself. Four years ago, the CSDA formed an Access to Care Committee to determine the best approach in addressing access to care issues, the driver of this debate. Models from around the world were evaluated and ultimately the CSDA identified Interim Therapeutic Restoration, Expanded Function Dental Assistants, and Dental Therapy as potential scope of practice issues that might have a positive effect on those in need being able to access care. The basis of these decisions was an evidence based approach to the issue, not an emotional one. Making emotional decisions on scope of practice issues without data to support a positive outcome on access to care is doomed to failure.

HB 6549 establishes a process to take the emotion out of these scope of practice debates for all professions, develops evidence based parameters for decision making , involves impartial committee members, and will ultimately help guide the final decision making by this committee and the Connecticut State Legislature. The goal for all of the health care professions and government is to get the best healthcare possible to the citizens of this state. Passing HB 6549 is an important step in making this happen. I strongly urge the support of this legislative process.

Respectfully submitted,

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