



Testimony of Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI)
To Public Health Committee
Concerning S.B. 1204
March 23, 2011

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you concerning S.B. 1204, An Act Establishing the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange.

For the record, I am Dr. Linda Erlanger, Advocacy Consultant for the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, also known as COHI. COHI is the state's leading oral health advocate, working with other stakeholders across Connecticut to advance oral health for all.

Over the years, COHI has testified both in favor of, and in opposition to, numerous bills raised by, or forwarded, to this Committee. Each time, we carry the same message: *Oral health is an essential part of overall health.* We will continue to advocate for oral health benefits and to see dental services become an integral and sustained component of individual, group and public-assistance health benefits plans.

We are grateful that the Affordability Care Act under Federal reform requires that State's establish health insurance exchanges. As an advocacy-focused organization, we would have preferred that dental services, especially preventive and basic restorative care, be required for adults in the Exchange as it is for children. A 2008 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Center for Health Statistics noted that "a primary indicator for access to dental care is dental insurance."

With that being said, COHI supports the inclusion of dental coverage options in the Exchange. We remain hopeful that you and your legislative colleagues will demand that affordable dental benefits packages offered in the Connecticut Health Care Exchange includes a varied range of preventive, restorative and maintenance services from which purchasers can choose.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact me at lindae@ctoralhealth.org or 860.246.2644, ext 202.