

**Legislative Testimony**  
**H.B. 5541 AAC Services Provided By Dental Professionals and**  
**Certification for Advanced Practice Dental Hygiene Practitioner**  
**Public Health Committee**  
**Wednesday, March 21, 2012**  
**Dr. Jennifer A. Diederich, RDH, DMD, ABOMR**

My name is Dr. Jennifer A. Diederich. I am a general dentist working in the Hartford and New Haven areas. I have been practicing dentistry since 1987. Before attending dental school, I practiced as a dental hygienist for ten years. Due to my past experiences as a hygienist, I have a unique perspective on HB5541.

I graduated from the University of Bridgeport Fones School Of Dental Hygiene in 1977, with an Associate's degree in Dental Hygiene. Since I enjoyed working in the dental field, I wanted to continue my education, allowing me to provide the highest quality of care to my patients. Over the next three years I worked as a dental hygienist and continued my education, working full time and taking prerequisite classes for dental school, graduating from Colorado State University with a BA in Biology in 1982. In August of 1983, I started dental school at Georgetown. Our rigorous course load included histology, biochemistry, gross anatomy, oral pathology, pharmacology, oral surgery, four years of clinical labs, and the list goes on.

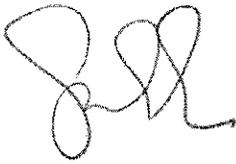
I graduated from the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in 1987 and started working in a private practice thinking that my four years of dental school had prepared me for the uncertainty that would lie ahead. However, just a few weeks into my new career, I realized that my real education was just beginning; I still had many questions and varying degrees of uncertainty in some situations. Because I was working in a well established group practice with experienced doctors, they mentored me through these trying encounters. I continued to practice "wet fingered" dentistry as I continued in an Oral-Maxillofacial Radiology Residency, assimilating vast knowledge and experience, which continues to this day- yet the more answers I have, the more questions arise.

The issue is; if I had questions after practicing for ten years as a dental hygienist and graduating from dental school and receiving high scores on my national board examinations, what kind of questions will these dental hygienists have? Many patients present with complicated medical histories and extensive treatment plans. How will hygienists handle these situations without an extensive medical background?

What will happen when a situation arises during treatment that was not anticipated? Consider too, that referring dentists are ultimately liable for any malpractice done by a provider to whom he/she had referred a patient. As dental hygienists work under the supervision of dentists, what is the risk if that provider is a dental hygienist? This is an unexplored area.

Currently, Connecticut Husky benefits do provide generous dental care for children, thus, they are not so “underserved” in that regard. The problem is the socioeconomic culture of these children does contribute to their higher and more severe dental diseases, which frequently places them beyond the scope of care that an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner would be able to provide. Let’s continue to improve access of care for the under-served, but substituting a thoroughly trained dentist for a lesser trained dental professional is not in the best interests of all citizens of Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Diederich', with a stylized, cursive script.

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