

March 16, 2012

Dear Distinguished Representatives and Senators,

I am writing this letter to address my passion and purpose. As a student RDH, I have been out in the community through my educational experience and witnessed such a lack of access to care amongst numerous target population groups. For instance, I participated and even volunteered additional clinical time to a school based dental hygiene clinic at an elementary school in Bridgeport, CT. I saw numerous children with rampant decay and heavy plaque mostly because some these children did not even own a toothbrush. I knew that with whatever time I had available that it was within my heart to provide as many services as possible because these children who most likely will not receive care elsewhere.

Now, CSDA states access to care is no longer a pressing problem because 1,300 dentists are Medicaid providers. Well, how about the hundreds of geriatric patients in nursing homes who have dentures and are without a denture brush or cleaner to care for them, resulting in candidiasis (fungal infection) spreading within their oral cavity? They also have decay in what remains of their dentition but they say they are unable to get to a dental facility due to lack of transportation, medical ailments, or they just didn't know there was a concern because nobody has educated them until we made a visit to their facility. With that said, their periodontal disease worsens as well as the incidence of carious lesions. What about the children I mentioned above with the rampant decay, or the special needs population I personally screened who have had the same cavities from screening to screening but due to poor access to care? By initiating the ADHP mid-level provider to Connecticut, these children, geriatric, special needs, and all other population groups in need can get the care they deserve. As a mid-level provider we can help our community in so many ways. We are not competing with dentists for their patients. We are going out and seeking the people who are not receiving care, this is very different.

Personally, my heart breaks because we have an opportunity to help those suffering from poor or lack of access to care in our State even though we have dedicated professionals willing to endure additional education and clinical training to help. What rationale does CSDA have to fight this, please tell me why? Have you yourself gone out into our community and screened children of all ages, with special needs (both children and adults), the mentally ill, substance abuse clients, and the elderly? Well, I have and what I saw disgusted me. I can't believe this is occurring in the State of Connecticut. In fact, I'm ashamed as a healthcare professional to witness how we have failed our citizens. Much of the data provided to dispute the fact that access to care is still a prevalent problem was in fact collected in private dental office and is not applicable to the populations the ADHP would service. If you had the opportunity to witness what I have witnessed over the last year through my public health clinical rotations as a dental hygiene student, you would understand that the disenfranchised are not represented in the statistics. These individuals are the hidden secret that only those who travel out into these forgotten settings find. These individuals are in the middle of cities, towns, and even right next door; we don't have to be in rural settings to find them, we just have to look and offer help. It pains me to say this but Connecticut is suffering, whether you want to believe it or not. Like I said, it has been a year of servicing the community with screenings and dental cleanings and at the end of each and every one of those days; the tears fell from my eyes. I felt for them the way I would feel for my own family if they themselves were under the same condition. I am dedicated to providing the same care to these individuals as I would want provided to my family.

I ask that you really take a look at Connecticut, and understand that it is truly in desperate need of a change. Our health care delivery system is spiraling downwards and we as hygienists and future hygienists would like to put a stop to this and make a positive change through the support of ADHP. An instructor once told me; being a dental hygienist starts with your head, goes to your hands and ends with your heart. We do not get into this profession with expectations of becoming wealthy. We are driven by passion to serve. Each day I feel a deep sense of pride and satisfaction because I know I have made a difference that is priceless. With that said, my whole heart is writing to you today to please consider our great concern and putting the most vulnerable people first.

Thank You,

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