



**Testimony of Victoria Veltri
State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Public Health Committee
In Support of HB 5541
March 21, 2012**

Good morning, Representative Ritter, Senator Gerratana, Senator Welch, Representative Perillo, and members of Public Health Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate (“OHA”). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I come before you today in support of HB 5541, which will expand the scope of services that may be performed by certain dental professionals as well as “increase access to and utilization of dental care for underserved populations through the use of advanced dental hygiene practitioners.” This bill represents an important step in the development and maintenance of a robust and sustainable dental healthcare system while controlling costs. The creation of an “expanded function dental auxiliary” (EFDA) capitalizes on the skills of a group of dental professionals by providing a career ladder for those in this entry level position. More importantly, EFDAs will free the dental

provider to perform complex care in a more efficient and responsive manner, increasing access and capacity. Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioners (ADHP) will have an even greater impact on access to and the efficiency of Connecticut's dental network, much in the same way that Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants have increased access to medical care and reduced the overall cost of care. The requirements that HB 5541 imposes for certification for either of these disciplines ensures that these providers have an appropriate level of education and training. In addition, the requisite collaborative management agreement between the dentist and the ADHP ensures that the ADHP cannot function independently, and leaves practice management and oversight in the hands of the dental provider.

This bill comes at a time when our most needy populations still struggle to find access to affordable and compassionate care. The Health Resources and Services Administration's most recent data indicates that there are 39 Health Provider Shortage Areas in Connecticut, primarily in the poorest urban and rural areas. While this represents a decrease over prior years, much of that can be linked to increased reimbursement for dental providers from DSS, pursuant to the settlement of a claim of substantial disparity in access and care for those served by DSS. As the provisions of that settlement reach their end, it becomes more critical than ever to increase the dental community's ability to contain costs while continuing to provide quality dental care. As such, I urge that you support HB 5541.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov.