



## CONNECTICUT DENTAL ASSISTANTS ASSOCIATION

March 4, 2012

**The Connecticut Dental Assistants Association (CDAA) offers the following testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 5242 - "An Act Concerning Donated Dental Services"**

Donated Dental Services (DDS) is part of the Dental Lifeline Network (DLN), formally known as the National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped. DLN is a charitable affiliate of the American Dental Association that was founded more than 36 years ago.

The DDS program is in its 26<sup>th</sup> year now, having begun in Colorado in 1986. This program coordinates the services of thousands of volunteer dentists and laboratories in all 50 states to provide 100% donated comprehensive dental care to vulnerable patients in need of dental care.

Through the DDS program, volunteer general dentists, specialists, and dental laboratories provide comprehensive dental treatment, free of charge to those who cannot afford treatment due to financial limitations associated with advanced age, and physical and/or mental disabilities. DDS volunteer dentists see patients in their own offices with visits arranged through a DDS Coordinator. The goal of DDS is to return patients to good oral health.

From July 2010 to June 2011, dentists nationwide donated over \$21.6 million in dental services to 7,495 people. This was accomplished by the volunteer efforts of nearly 15,000 dentists and 3,200 dental laboratories. Participation in Connecticut included 47 dentists and 7 laboratories providing \$69,435 in donated services.

Vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled and medically-compromised suffer needlessly from dental disease and poor oral health because they often cannot afford to visit a dentist to get the necessary treatment. Studies have shown that poor oral health can lead to other health concerns such as heart disease, worsening of diabetes and infections.

Connecticut dentists already participate in programs such as "Give Kids a Smile Day" and "Mission of Mercy" which provide access to care to the underserved. The Donated Dental Services program is just one more way to provide that much needed dental care.

The CDAA supports Raised Bill No. 5242 in establishing and operating a program that delivers charitable services to the needy, disabled, aged, medically-compromised and other vulnerable individuals in Connecticut, and includes a network of volunteer dentists, dental specialists, dental laboratories and other dental professionals who will donate dental services to eligible persons. The CDAA also supports the appropriation of \$85,000 to the Connecticut Department of Health, from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013 for the Connecticut DDS program. This is a gift of dental health for a better life. The CDAA urges the General Assembly to pass Raised Bill. No. 5242.

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