



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
*DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES*  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN  
Commissioner

**Testimony by Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Before the Public Health Committee**  
**March 7, 2012**

Good morning Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Ritter, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Patricia Rehmer and I am writing to express our concerns regarding **HB 5243 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF MERCURY IN DENTISTRY.**

HB 5243 would ban the use of amalgam fillings creating dental care issues for DMHAS patients, and possibly among other special needs patients as well. Amalgam as a dental material is by far the most suitable and durable substance used so far for the various challenges encountered in treating a special needs population such as the individuals served by DMHAS. It is quickly and easily placed, technique forgiving, and although not ideal can be placed in an environment where bleeding and moisture are difficult to control. It is much less expensive than the other alternatives and has withstood the test of time far longer than the tooth colored materials we are using today, which have inherent properties making them an extremely poor choice in some of the conditions that we're faced with in challenging patient populations. Some of the challenges with using other materials are:

1. They must be placed in ideal moisture free environments which many times are impossible to achieve on the individuals we serve.
2. They take much longer to place since they need to be placed in small increments at a time and hardened with a special light for 40 seconds for each increment. Many of our patients find it difficult to sit for long periods of time in the chair and when performing these procedures on patients in the operating room under general anesthesia it subjects them to being under general anesthesia for a much longer time period.
3. They are much more expensive – which adds significantly to the cost of treatment which in these times of economic crisis would create even greater roadblocks to accessing care.
4. Some of them are more susceptible to recurrent tooth decay than amalgam which has bacteriostatic properties.
5. Amalgam has been used successfully for over 100yrs. The tooth-colored materials are being developed and modified daily trying to overcome the limitations of their predecessors.
6. They are weaker than amalgam.

DMHAS does use other materials for fillings when warranted but an outright ban would make dental care more difficult for the people we serve. I thank you for your time and attention to this matter.