

Testimony for **HB 5541: An Act Concerning Services Provided by Dental Professionals and Certification for Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner**

There have been many negative comments from the CT State Dental Association about this Bill, many of them based on misinformation or on the concept that this will take away from dentistry instead of enhancing it. I speak in favor of this Bill.

I am a dental hygienist positioned at a public health clinic where I have been employed for 16 years. My experience has been that the needs of the patients are quite different from those seen in private practice. For every new patient with a cleaning appointment, 10 to 15 appointments with the dentist is not unusual because of the treatment needs of the patients. Positioning an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner makes so much sense, The ADHP could be providing treatment that is routine and straightforward, freeing up time for the dentists to perform the more complex dental procedures.

The ADHP model is based on education and training. With an experienced licensed dental hygienist completing the ADHP curriculum at a Master Degree level, the scope of practice would be clearly defined and associated with a certificate upon completion. Then using a collaborative agreement between either the dentist or the facility, the limitations of the scope of practice would again be defined and established so the patient could benefit from having more providers available to complete treatment. The ADHP could perceivably save a PH facility money, since the salary would be 38% less than a dentist.

The ADHP would be trained and educated to diagnose oral and systemic disease (curriculum often the same hours as a dental student for the didactic and clinical portion) and limited to prescribing fluorides, antimicrobials, analgesics and antibiotics. However, the ADHP provider would not work in a vacuum – this provider would be another integral part of the dental team, working closely with dentists, hygienists and assistants.

Another part of this proposal that is often overlooked is the relationships of trust that is developed between the hygienist and patient. I can think of many situations when I am providing preventive care for my adult mentally retarded patients. They trust me and are comfortable receiving treatment from me as a provider. It would be so wonderful to be able to extend that treatment to these special needs patients when a routine amalgam or composite is needed. Decay would be identified early, treated quicker and with comfort for the patient because of being familiar with the person and the setting. The same would be for the children, adults and seniors that I see, also.

According to the CT Department of Social Services, CT no longer has an access to oral health problem with more providers for children on Medicaid. This may hold true for emergency appointments and preventive appointments but there is still a challenge to COMPLETE ALL treatment for the children. We still have a backlog of children to be seen because of transportation issues, complications with family needs other than dental that affect the children keeping appointments. There is definitely a lack of providers for the Medicaid Adult population. Some of our patients have waited six months to get seen

for a first time appointment. The ADHP could ease this load considerably in a cost effective manner and to extend treatment to others: uninsured, families, adults and seniors.

In the states where dental hygienists practice with an advanced scope, procedures are being performed now (and there are many versions of the scope of practice) and they are successful and utilized. There have been no problems with these models to date. The most advanced model is in Minnesota which is almost identical to the CT proposal of ADHP.

It's time for CT to look toward the future to help serve the citizens in our state sooner, by providers who are appropriately educated and trained and in areas that are reachable. Please support HB 5541.

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