

**Written Legislative Testimony and Letter of Support to the Public Health Committee Regarding:  
H.B. 5541 (RAISED) "AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES PROVIDED BY DENTAL  
PROFESSIONALS AND CERTIFICATION FOR ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE  
PRACTITIONERS"**

**Monday, March 19, 2012**

**Submitted by: Laurel Risom RDH, MPH**

**Dear Senator Gerratana and Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee,**

My name is **Laurel Risom**; I am a licensed, registered dental hygienist living in the town of Old Lyme CT. Thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony and support of HB 5541.

I support the Establishment of H.B. 5541 "AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES PROVIDED BY DENTAL PROFESSIONALS AND CERTIFICATION FOR ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS" in CT and support the use of the advanced dental hygiene practitioner (ADHP) in public health settings. The Advanced dental hygiene practitioner can increase availability and access to dental care for the CT underserved populations.

I have been a practicing dental hygienist for over 30 years in Connecticut. In addition, I am an educator at the University of Bridgeport, I teach Community Dental Hygiene to students at the Fones School. One of my responsibilities is to escort and supervise dental hygiene students out on rotation at Pedodontic (child) Community sites in the greater Bridgeport and Stratford areas. We visit local day care centers, head start programs, nursery schools, YMCA child readiness preschools and elementary schools. While out on rotation we screen children for dental needs, teach oral hygiene instruction and provide nutritional counseling to this young population. Many children that we visit are very much in need of dental services. We provide screening forms for those that we visit, to the parent's of the children we see, social workers and the site supervisors, but that does not always guarantee care. Many barriers exist for these children, economics, transportation and availability of appointment space for basic dental pediatric services at the clinics.

This past Fall semester, I recorded the following findings from dental screening 592 children age 3 to 5; 149 of the children had obvious dental decay, a 25 % prevalence of untreated cavities. Thirteen percent of the children had some restorations and 7% needed immediate emergency dental care for oral infections.

The advantage of the ADHP is to provide care in community settings. This midlevel care provider can help address the shortage of dentists in the work force, and provide needed care to the dentally underserved, including the children of Bridgeport who clearly demonstrate need. The ADHP will increase Connecticut's ability to provide preventive and restorative services in a cost effective manner, in collaboration with dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants and other healthcare professionals.

In closing, I would be happy to discuss HB 5541 with you and hope that you support HB 5541 in CT, to provide more dental care in public health settings, for the health and wellbeing of our children in Connecticut.

Sincerely,



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