



Children's Dental Services

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Senator Terry Gerratana
Representative Susan Johnson
Members of the Public Health Committee

March 19, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Children's Dental Services (CDS) in **opposition to HB 6589, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study the Scope of Practice for Dental Hygienists.**

Since 1919, Children's Dental Services (CDS) has been dedicated to improving the oral health of children from low-income families by providing accessible treatment and education to diverse communities. CDS provides a full range of dental services to children from birth until age twenty-one and to pregnant women at its stand-alone headquarters location, satellite programs throughout the state, and portable care program in over 300 schools, Head Starts, and community centers in the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. CDS was one of the first in the country to offer care at Head Start locations and has one of the most extensive networks of school based clinics.

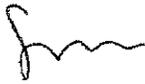
Minnesota has experienced many of the same struggles that other states face in making dental care accessible to middle and low-income families. CDS supported the creation of mid-level practitioners and has extensively utilized Dental Therapists from both the University of Minnesota and Metropolitan State in its clinic and employs the nation's first Advanced Dental Therapist.

The results of implementing dental therapists into the team have exceeded expectations. Perhaps the best evidence of the success of the model is that while the Dental Therapists production has steadily increased since their addition to the dental team – so has the production of their supervising dentists. Further, while CDS supported both models of dental therapy, there are significant benefits to dual licensure. Hygiene backgrounds enable one provider to effectively perform both preventive and restorative procedures and can often times reduce the number of visits required to complete treatment. The Advanced Dental Therapy model also provides a path to advance one's career while remaining grounded in public health and prevention.

I urge you to thoughtfully consider the proposal and to recognize that a task force to study the scope of practice for dental hygienists is unnecessary. The expanded dental hygiene practice afforded by the Advanced Dental Therapist is working well in Minnesota.

The use of Dental Therapists and Advanced Dental Therapists should be considered one of the most effective tools for increasing access to quality dental care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Wovcha', with a stylized, cursive-like flourish at the end.

Sarah Wovcha, JD, MPH
Executive Director