

March 13, 2013

Ref: raised SB 993 An Act Concerning Dental Assistants and Expanded function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA)

Senator Gerrantana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Beverly P. Whitford. I'm a licensed dental hygienist who lives in old Mystic and has practiced in this state for half a century. I speak in opposition to SB993. I do not oppose the Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA), I oppose the way it is presented in the bill because many dental assistants are on-the-job trained and have no formal dental assisting education. The EFDA language needs to be more precise to protect the public's safety. I also oppose SB993 because the Dental Hygiene Mid-level Provider (which in Connecticut we call the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner- ADHP) was excluded.

This year dental hygienists world-wide are celebrating the professions 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In late May, The Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association will host a Centennial Celebration in Bridgeport, the birthplace of the dental hygiene profession. The "job description" of the dental hygienist has expanded greatly over the last 100 years, always accompanied by appropriate additional education to support an increase in scope of practice. These changes have allowed dental hygienists to provide a wider range of services to improve the oral health of Connecticut's citizens. It's a known fact that oral health is an integral part of total body health. Dental Hygienists are licensed oral health care providers and the ADHP will be controlled by that license to provide safe services. In my opinion, it's time to allow dental hygienists who are willing to spend the time and money required to achieve the ADHP masters level degree to take another step forward in providing more oral health services in public health settings to our underserved citizens. Please be aware that the ADHP would not in any way impact a dentist's private practice.

Access to dental care is a serious and growing problem in our state along with a severe shortage of dentists. 60 percent of CT dentists are expected to retire in the next 15 – 20 years. According to the Department of Public Health (DPH), as of April, 2010, Connecticut currently has 98 Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designations representing all or parts of 32 towns in each of Connecticut's 8 counties. This information is updated every three years and can be found at: <http://ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3132&q=388118>

The Connecticut State Dental Association has recently stated that ADHP is not needed because Connecticut "no longer has an access to oral health problem". Tell that to low-income residents of the state—40 percent of the state's low-income children still receive no preventive services and only 33 percent receive treatment services. ADHP can go a long ways toward filling the need for oral health services in underserved communities.

Connecticut was the first state to have dental hygienists. To better serve the oral health needs of our citizens, let's not be the last state to have a much needed mid-level dental provider, the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner.

Thank you.

Beverly P. Whitford, RDH, BS

Past President:

Eastern Connecticut Dental Hygienists Association  
Connecticut Dental Hygienists Association  
American Dental Hygienists' Association