

**Legislative Testimony  
Public Health Committee**

**Proposed HB 6275: An Act Concerning Certification of Advanced Dental  
Hygiene Practitioners**

**Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Douglas B. Keck, D.M.D., M.S.**

Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Douglas B. Keck. I have been practicing pediatric dentistry in New Haven and Madison for 23 years. I teach pediatric dental residents at Yale-New Haven Hospital and I am a HUSKY/Medicaid provider. I am writing testimony in opposition to proposed House Bill 6275: An Act Concerning Certification of Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioners.

The Department of Public Health studied "Scope of Practice" issues in oral health in 2011(I was a participant in the discussions) and returned a report to the Public Health Committee in 2012 which did not suggest a need to change the scope of practice for dental hygienists. In fact, since this time, through the efforts of the CT State Dental Association and the CT Dental Health Partnership, over 1900 dental providers have joined the HUSKY Medicaid program and provide dental services to the underserved. One hundred percent of these patients have access to oral health services within 15 miles of their home and the State will provide transportation services for them to get to their dental appointments. In addition, 75% of the care provided to these patients is in private offices rather than safety net facilities. Clearly, according to this data, there is no need to improve dental services by allowing advanced dental hygiene practitioners to provide oral health services to the underserved in Connecticut.

Looking at this issue from a broader perspective that includes both our country and other countries around the globe, there is very little evidence that a "mid-level" oral health provider increases access to care. The only area where minimal evidence exists is where access is difficult due to the physical barrier of geography (remote areas). The issue becomes one of utilization, which means getting patients to understand that oral health indeed is a part of overall health and to seek a "dental home." Similar bills to HB 6275 have been proposed since 2009 and all have failed to make it out of Committee or to be voted on. In fact, if a dental hygienist would like to provide advanced services, they could spend an additional two years in post graduate education and receive a dental degree.

Proposed HB 6275 would also add costs to the State Budget. A new process of examination to demonstrate clinical competency of these providers would need to be developed to ensure patient safety. Accreditation procedures would need to be developed for the

institutions providing the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner degree. Also, at this time there is no regulatory State Agency with oversight responsibilities focused on quality of care standards of a mid-level practitioner like the Dental Commissioner oversees the dental practitioner. These issues all carry fiscal responsibilities.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your time and for allowing me to submit this testimony. Once again, I ask that you oppose this proposed bill and any effort to amend Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner language to any other bill.

In closing, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have and to make every attempt to make myself available at your convenience.

Respectfully Submitted,

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