

**Testimony in support of Proposed H.B. No. 6275 AN ACT CONCERNING
CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jody Bishop-Pullan. I am a Registered Dental Hygienist, employed by the City of Stamford Department of Health and Social Services as a dental case manager. I am writing in support of Proposed **H.B. No. 6275, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS.**

Establishing a midlevel provider in the form of an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) who is a licensed dental hygienist educated at the Master's level to provide limited dental services would expand access to oral health care for thousands of low-income families who seek healthcare from public health facilities.

My position with the Health Department is to coordinate the oral health program and to ensure children receive preventive and restorative care. Getting a child to treatment often requires intense case management, as many of the families we care for have complex lives and face multiple barriers to utilizing care. The ideal setting to provide services to low-income families is in schools where children are, neighborhood community clinics where families live or mobile clinics that travel to the clients. These sites reduce barriers to care such as transportation and time away from work and school. Many people in Connecticut do not have dental insurance. Most of the inquiries I receive about services are from uninsured low income adults and many of the children served in our clinics are uninsured. Their parents struggle to pay for dental services for themselves or go without. While some providers feel good about donating services one or two days a year, public health practitioners work daily to provide a dental home for our clients working toward improving the health and quality of life in our communities. Yet we know our school based clinics and public health facilities operate on shoestring budgets and funding is scarce. An (ADHP) provides an affordable alternative for non-profit public health facilities to deliver care.

Prevention and early intervention are key to decreasing the risk of infections and occurrence of more complex dental problems as well as decreasing the cost of oral health care. An ADHP provides primary and secondary prevention. The concept is built on the fundamental education and philosophy of prevention and access to care that Dr. Alfred Civilian Fones envisioned and developed for Dental Hygiene in Bridgeport over 100 years ago.

The crisis in dental healthcare and how to address it is of national concern. Studies by the Pew Charitable Trust, the Kellogg Foundation and others are ongoing and there is support nationally for workforce development, including midlevel providers. There is support from professional organizations such as the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and a recent survey of the public published by the Kellogg Foundation showed that 76% of American surveyed support training for midlevel dental providers. A 2014 survey conducted in Connecticut by me personally, indicated that the most frequent

reason given for delaying or forgoing dental care was the high cost. The frequency of acceptance for services in the proposed expanded scope of a dental therapist based on the ADHP model ranged between 69% and 76% for both children and adults.

Please support HB 6275. Thank you.