



Fones School of Dental Hygiene

March 11, 2015

Testimony to the Public Health Committee in support of **Proposed H.B. No. 6275, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS.**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Marcia Lorentzen, Dean of the Fones School of Dental Hygiene, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT. I am testifying in support of **Proposed H.B. No. 6275, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS.**

The Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) is the logical answer to delivering quality care to individuals who have unmet oral care needs in Connecticut. As envisioned by the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) in 2004, the advanced dental hygiene practitioner is a licensed dental hygienist who has completed graduate education that includes acquisition of competencies building upon the fundamental knowledge and skills achieved at the entry level, and furthermore prepares individuals for evidence-based clinical decision-making, and a scope of practice and responsibility required of advance practitioners.

The Pew Center on the States in 2010 reported support of the establishment of new dental providers and identified beneficial results dental hygienist-therapists are providing in expansion of oral evaluations, radiographic imaging, preventive services; restorative care, pulpotomies, and simple extractions; and cost effective treatment for Medicaid clients. In early 2015 the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reported on the supply and demand for dentists and dental hygienists estimating a serious shortage of dentists in 2025, even with the potential for new dental schools to open, and an oversupply of dental hygiene graduates. "HRSA is supporting the training of advanced dental hygienists who will expand dental hygienist roles to maximum allowable under state scope practice laws."

The first program in the United States to be based on the ADHP model is delivered through Metropolitan State University in Minnesota, built on a partnership with Normandale Community College which graduates dental hygienists at the BS degree. MSU's curriculum leads to the Master of Science in Advanced Dental Therapy. The new practitioners are practicing with great success economically and in patient care rendered in Minnesota dental practices. Maine enacted legislation in 2014 and is pursuing additional training for dental hygienists to positively impact expansion of the workforce. Other states are pursuing dental hygiene provider workforce models.

The University of Bridgeport supports advancing the role of dental hygiene professionals by providing education in an advanced practice category. The Fones School of Dental Hygiene is

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fully accredited by NEASC and the CT Office of Higher Education, with the entry level clinical program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). In collaboration with the UB Clinics, health professional education at the University of Bridgeport is of high quality and provides services to the community most of whom are uninsured, underinsured, and of very limited financial means. The University has practice agreements with numerous Bridgeport area agencies that look forward to the day when Fones School of Dental Hygiene student/interns can provide restorative treatment to their clients in addition to the education and prevention that will continue to be rendered. With full understanding of the oral and overall systemic link, these training partners look forward to their clients benefiting from an advanced practitioner's skills.

As the discussion and activation of midlevel providers continued over the past years, most notably the graduation and employment of Minnesota Dental Therapists, the Commission on Dental Accreditation completed Accreditation Standards for Dental Therapy Education Programs which became effective February 6, 2015. The Accreditation Standards for Dental Therapy Education Programs (DTEP) encourage the use of articulation arrangements and career laddering, recognizing the potential for advanced standing for students having gone through other CODA accredited programs, for example dental hygiene. The CODA document is a means of evaluating, encouraging innovations in, and consultation for programs leading to the Dental Therapist. The MSDH program at the University of Bridgeport intends to provide a curriculum that surpasses the adopted DTEP Standards.

The licensed dental hygienist, one who has graduated from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program, earned a baccalaureate degree, has practice experience, and has completed a program that minimally meets the standards of DTEP, is well qualified to be certified to practice as a midlevel provider. The education, licensure and practice of the dental hygienist, as defined and authorized by Chapter 379a of the state statutes, provides a strong foundation for a midlevel provider. The licensed dental hygiene professional is the most educationally qualified health care practitioner to become the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner in the state of Connecticut, assessing and addressing the health of the client, and initiating a plan to begin meeting the oral care needs of our patients.

The educational plan for establishing the ADHP curriculum in the MSDH program at the University of Bridgeport subscribes to the 2013 American Dental Hygienists' Association definition of Advanced Practice Dental Hygiene:

1. Provision of clinical and diagnostic services in addition to those services permitted to an entry level dental hygienist, including services that require advanced clinical decision making, judgment, and problem solving.
2. Completion of a clinical and academic educational program beyond the first professional degree required for entry level licensure which qualifies the dental hygienist to provide advanced practice services and includes preparation to practice in direct access settings and collaborative relationships.
3. Documentation of proficiency such as professional certification.

As Dean of the Fones School of Dental Hygiene, University of Bridgeport, I urge you to support the proposed H.B. No. 6275, the ADHP workforce model that promotes job growth in the dental hygiene profession and supports healthy people for Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Marcus A. Roentgen, RDH, MS Ed, EdD