



## Connecticut State Dental Association

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**Legislative Testimony**  
**Public Health Committee**  
**HB 5133 – An Act Concerning Dental Assistants**  
**Tuesday, February 16, 2016**  
**Jonathan B. Knapp, D.M.D.**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Jonathan Knapp. I am a Past President of the Connecticut State Dental Association, Past Chair of the ADA Council on Dental Practice and currently Chair the Subcommittee on Information Exchange of the Standards Committee on Dental Informatics, an ANSI accredited Standards Development Organization. I have run a general and family dental practice in Bethel since 1993 and currently serve hundreds of Connecticut Medicaid patients, both children and adults. I serve on the Board for CT Mission of Mercy CT-MOM, and on the Administrative Board for The Perinatal & Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Project at CTDHP (a HRSA Grant to Husky). I am here to testify in favor of HB 5133 – An Act Concerning Dental Assistants.

Passage and enactment of the provisions of HB 5133 are long overdue. The statutes in our state governing dental assisting have not been meaningfully updated in close to 40 years! This bill calls for the codification of Certified Dental Assistants and Orthodontic Assistants, positions that exist throughout the nation, and have so for many years. Meanwhile, 44+ other states have modernized the dental assisting statutes going beyond this to include provisions for Expanded Function Dental Assistants. It is my understanding that the Connecticut Dental Assisting Association intended to have EFDA provisions included in this Bill but that they were not included in the current draft. I support the addition of language to allow EFDA's as well.

In addition to the tremendous potential to improve practice efficiency, in FQHC's as well as in private Medicaid practices who render care for the overwhelming majority of our states Husky patients, codifying CDA's, Ortho CDA's (as well as EFDA's) will provide a career path in a field where severe limitations have historically existed in our state. Unlike hygienists, who can (because of a four year degree), and have regularly transitioned to become dentists, lower paid dental assistants have not been afforded a pathway to improve skills and be compensated accordingly. In addition, there are CDA's and EFDA's coming out of military service, for whom it would be beneficial to provide employment and career options in our state.

Lastly, I commend the language in Section (4), subsection (c), which provides for consultation between DPH and the Connecticut State Dental Commission to determine the appropriate competencies for credentialed and non-credentialed dental assistants. Materials, techniques, instruments and technologies are constantly evolving - more quickly now than ever before. The Dental Commissioners, as the state's dental experts, would be the best suited to determine appropriate competencies and levels of supervision for our assisting team members. Not including a laundry list of competencies in statute allows much more flexibility as procedures and practice standards evolve. We have the expertise to respond accordingly without the need to submit new legislation.

I urge you to support HB 5133 and the modernization of dental assisting in our state as a standalone issue. Discussion of the other dental workforce models has led to significant confusion and controversy because they are shrouded in misinformation and misconceptions; about where they originated, where they have been utilized, their record of safety and effectiveness, and their similarities - and differences - with regard to other models. The measures in HB 5133 regarding dental assisting (and EFDA's) are straightforward and clear. Please bring Connecticut's dental assisting statutes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I urge adoption of HB 5133 - An Act Concerning Dental Assistants as proposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

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