



Connecticut State Dental Association

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**Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
HB 5537 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the
Public Health Statutes**

**Monday, March 7, 2016
William C. Nash, D.M.D.**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. William Nash. I have been practicing general dentistry in Fairfield for 38 years. I am currently the President of the Connecticut State Dental Assoc. My volunteer service to the citizens of our state includes GKAS, CT-MOM, as well as being a HUSKY/Medicaid provider. On behalf of the nearly 2,500 member dentists from across the state, I submit this testimony regarding Raised Bill 5537 – An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes, specifically related to the proposed educational requirements for dental assistants.

Infection control in the dental office is paramount to patient safety. As the organization representing dentists and other dental health providers in the State of Connecticut, the CSDA supports the concept of ensuring that all dental providers are competently trained in the principles and practice of infection control.

To that end, we support including a requirement of at least one hour of training or education in infection control in a dental setting every two years, for dentists and dental hygienists. As dental professionals who receive infection control as a major part of their professional training, opportunities to update providers on how to combat emerging infection risks, such as the recent Ebola virus crisis, is essential. We have a great history of working together with the DPH to ensure that our members are informed of issues of concern raised by the Department, and in fact, have already developed and implemented infection control educational opportunities for our members and other dental care providers.

We also understand and accept the assertion of the Department of Public Health that many dental assistants are educated through on-the-job training, and may not receive the thorough baseline education for affective and appropriate infection control standards that

would otherwise be received through formal training programs. For this reason, having dental assistants verify successful completion of an appropriate infection control course seems logical.

However, requiring dental assistants to pass the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) Infection Control Exam (ICE) is far too onerous and costly for the dental assistant and the employing dentist. The cost for the ICE examination is \$250, and without passing this particular examination, as required by this bill, a dentist will not be allowed to delegate any dental procedures to that assistant, meaning that the dental assistant will be out of work.

Whether the cost for this specific examination and certification is borne by the dentist, or passed on to the dental assistant, it creates an unnecessary financial burden to ensuring gainful employment and effectively providing dental care to patients.

Therefore, we would respectfully request the Committee's consideration of an amendment to HB 5537 providing an alternative to the DANB examination requirement, such as including a requirement for continuing education similar to that required for dentists and dental hygienists. In addition, the CSDA would be willing to work with the Connecticut Dental Assistants Association, the Department of Public Health, and representatives of the formal dental assisting education programs across the state to identify or develop a more cost effective examination to accurately assess competency in infection control concepts and guidelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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