

Legislative Testimony
Public Health Committee
HB 5538 – An Act Concerning the Scope of Practice for Anesthesiologists
Monday, March 7, 2016
Michael J Safian, DDS

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, members of the committee, my name is Michael J Safian, DDS, a board certified oral & maxillofacial surgeon with practices in Shelton and Stratford, and I reside with my family in Woodbridge. I received my dental degree from New York University, and completed my oral & maxillofacial surgery training at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital and the Hospital of St. Raphael. I have served the citizens of our great state since 1999 as a Husky Medicaid provider, volunteer at the Mission of Mercy, and on the Department of Social Services' Dental Policy Advisory Committee. I currently serve as the president-elect of the Connecticut Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, and as the anesthesia chair of the Connecticut Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. Aside from private practice, I am also on the teaching staff at Yale-New Haven Hospital in the oral and maxillofacial surgery residency program. Serving on the resident selection committee, the resident clinical competency committee, and most relevant to these hearings, on the simulated anesthesia emergency training faculty.

I come before you today to testify in opposition HB 5538 – An Act Concerning the Scope of Practice for Anesthesiologists.

My objection stands not to anesthesiologists providing anesthesia for dental patients. I have been trained in anesthesia by some of the finest anesthesiologists in the country, at the Hospital of St. Raphael. Should I ever require surgery, I would feel very safe and protected in their hands. This is not only because I have intimate knowledge of their skills and dedication, but also because I know that I would be treated in a very safe environment. And it is because I feel that all patients should only be treated in the safest possible environment, that I raise my objection to the bill.

For many years here in Connecticut, the Department of Public Health in coordination with the Connecticut Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons has

required, through the current legislation, an initial evaluation of every dental provider before they can receive their license to administer moderate, deep or general anesthesia. These initial evaluations include an inventory of the emergency medications and equipment that the Department of Public Health requires in each office providing sedation and general anesthesia, a live demonstration of anesthesia techniques on 2 patients, and finally an evaluation of the provider and anesthesia team in handling emergency situations via an oral examination. Aside from the demonstration on 2 patients, this process is repeated every 5 years for every provider, in order for them to maintain their license.

These evaluations are not a “gimmee”. As anesthesia chair I have had to deal with providers failing their exams, and as an examiner I have had to fail providers myself. While passing an evaluation does not guarantee that unfortunate events will not happen, they do lessen the risk that unfortunate events will not happen because the provider was not properly prepared and equipped to resolve the event. This is a system that has worked well, very well.

Should legislation eventually pass this esteemed body that allows for MD licensed anesthesiologists to provide services to patients in dental offices, it must include the exact equivalent requirements for emergency medications, emergency equipment and on site evaluations of the provider and the anesthesia team that we currently have in place. HB-5538, as currently written, does not include these provisions.

This represents an issue of patient safety that cannot be ignored. Adding an MD to a name does not make that person immune to tragedy, but ensuring preparedness can lessen the risks.

I urge you, for the safety of our citizens, to oppose and vote against HB-5538. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

Respectfully submitted,

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