Written Testimony Submitted by Margaret Sayers, MS, RN  
Regarding Senate Bill 40, An Act Concerning the Certification of Dental Therapists  
For the February 22, 2017 Public Hearing of the Committee on Public Health

SB 40 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CERTIFICATION OF DENTAL THERAPISTS.

I am speaking in support of SB 40 “An Act Concerning the Certification of Dental Therapist.” Legislation to create Dental Therapists has come before the legislature for at least the last 20 years. In the Public Health sector such as School Based Health Centers and FQHC this would open up dental care to many more people who currently lack dental care. Programs to train Dental Hygienist as Advanced Practice Dental Hygienist or Dental Therapist have been in existence for at least 10 years. The stumbling block has been the lack of a national certifying exam. Other States have set up either certifying or licensing requirements. By requiring the Department of Public Health to develop the certifying exam it would enable this practice to go forward. I would also recommend that the bill be amended to allow for the practice of advanced practice dental hygiene, once the dental hygienist has become certified as a Dental Therapist.

You will hear a great deal of testimony that there is no need for this level of care. However, first the ACA does not always include a dental rider, even if it continues beyond this year. Without insurance, dental care is too expensive for many. Second, in the School Based Health Centers, the dentist would welcome, the advanced practice by the Dental Hygienist’s they supervise. For many of the children, especially in our large cities, the hygienist is the first person, who has provided them with any dental care.

Yes, the Dentists in Connecticut have improved access to care. They have done a great job, but it does not solve every situation. Good dental care is the doorway to prevention of exacerbation of other diseases. We should not leave out any segment of the population and this is the best way to accomplish this goal.

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