

March 5, 2019

Testimony in Support of H.B. 5627

Good afternoon Honorable Senator Lessor, Honorable Representative Scanlon and members of the insurance Real Estate Committee.

My name is Jermaine Clarke I am a registered voter in Hartford Connecticut. I am here today in my role as a Dental Hygiene student From Tunxis Community College's Dental Hygiene program.

I am here to testify in support of H.B 5627. This act extends the period a child, stepchild or other dependent children may retain dental insurance coverage under a parent's health insurance policy.

I am sure the testimonies presented today will bring light to how many have lost dental coverage in their time of need. I too am one of these people. Rather than speaking about how I was personally affected by losing dental coverage, I find my time better dedicated to elucidating the connection between oral health and overall health. By the end of this testimony, I hope everyone listening will realize that oral health and overall health are synonymous and that our policies need to reflect this relationship as well.

Losing dental coverage but retaining health care coverage is equivalent to playing football without a helmet. What good is protecting the rest of your body and leaving your head completely exposed?

It seems that many of us are unaware of how a dental disease can manifest into diseases that can affect other bodily systems and organs. For example, something as simple as an infected tooth which can be drained by a dentist can become extremely dangerous if left unchecked. The bacteria from an infected tooth can spread to the lungs. In order to treat this, you'd have to call pulmonologist. The bacteria from the tooth infection can also spread to the heart, which would need to be treated by a cardiologist. The bacteria from an infected tooth can even spread to the brain, which would require a neurosurgeon to resolve the situation.

I think every one of these medical specialists mentioned would be severely disappointed in our health care system that allowed a tooth infection to progress to that nature. It's a waste of resources especially for something preventable, and could potentially cost insurance companies more money in the long run. This is due to the fact that they will be paying more money for complex medical procedures caused by dental disease rather than paying for routine dental visits that could prevent severe disease.

Keep in mind that the examples depicted to you today highlight the synergistic relationship between oral health and overall health. These are just a few of the many instances of where lack of dental coverage can progress into severe disease.

I encourage you to extend dental coverage on family plans to young people up to age 26. Thank you for your time and supporting young people in Connecticut.

Jermaine Clarke