



Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

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Supporting

HB 7279: An Act Allowing Dentists to Test for Diabetes
Public Health Committee
March 13, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 7279: An Act Allowing Dentists to Test for Diabetes.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT), and its sixteen member federally-qualified health centers, I want to thank the Committee for raising this bill on this critical issue. Connecticut's federally-qualified health centers serve almost 400,000 people each year, providing medical, behavioral health and dental care in over 100 locations across the state. Almost all of the health centers offer dental on-site; several also offer dental throughout their communities, either on a van or through portable equipment. In 2016, health centers provided over 264,000 dental visits across the state.

CHCACT supports this bill, which will help identify people at risk of developing, or who may already have, diabetes. For diabetes, as with many conditions, early identification can promote better health outcomes.

Growing evidence supports the fact that oral health and overall health are closely linked, and diabetes is one of the key medical conditions tied to oral health. Although many people are aware of the association of diabetes with nerve damage and neuropathy, there are also a host of oral conditions associated with diabetes, including periodontal disease, tooth decay, salivary dysfunction, and dry mouth. For these reasons, it is important for people with diabetes to have dentists on their health care team.

The concept of testing for diabetes in the dental setting would work particularly well in health centers, which already use an integrated model of care; a health center patient identified as being at-risk could make an appointment with a medical provider while at the health center for the dental visit. Health center dental and medical departments share electronic health records as well.

CHCACT also recommends that dental hygienists be added as providers allowed to conduct this testing.

I ask that you please support this bill, which is another step in the right direction for health care in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: dpolun@chcact.org or 860.667.7820.