

**Testimony Supporting**

**H.B. 5249 An Act Concerning Dental Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children**

**H.B. 5253: An Act Concerning Dental and Vision Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children**

**S.B. 369: An Act Concerning Dental and Vision Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children**

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

March 9, 2020

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, Senator Kelly, Representative Pavalock- D'Amato, and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

We are submitting testimony today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices), a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that Connecticut is a thriving and equitable state where all children have an opportunity to achieve their full potential.

**CT Voices supports H.B. 5259: An Act Concerning Dental Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children; H.B. 5253: An Act Concerning Dental and Vision Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children; and S.B. 369: An Act Concerning Dental and Vision Insurance Coverage for Children, Stepchildren, and Other Dependent Children.** These bills allow the continuity of dental care for young adults until 26 years old; currently, the Affordable Care Act only ensures dental insurance coverage up to age 19.

Oral health improves one's quality of life and is predictive of overall health. Dental problems can contribute to significant medical issues such as oral and craniofacial injuries and diseases. Additionally, individuals with disabilities are especially prone to poor oral health. H.B. 5259, H.B. 5253, and S.B. 369 will improve access to preventative and treatment services. Young adults of color and/or from low-to-middle income backgrounds have the most challenges in accessing oral health care; it is necessary to extend dental services and interventions in order to reduce these disparities. The passage of the proposed legislation will help to close the dental coverage gap for our most vulnerable young adults.

**JUST FACTS**

- Young adults from low-income families are far more likely to have cavities than those from high-income families.<sup>1</sup>
- 35% of young adults have difficulty biting and chewing.<sup>2</sup>
- Dental emergency treatments cost significantly more than preventative dental care.<sup>3</sup>
- Gum disease is associated with heart disease, low birthweight, diabetes, and stroke.<sup>4</sup>

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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CT Voices for Children

<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>2</sup> American Dental Association Health Policy Institute

<sup>3</sup> Cigna, Improved Health & Lower Medicaid Costs

<sup>4</sup> Connecticut Department of Public Health