**MDHA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE-OCTOBER 10, 2017**

**CURRENT INITIATIVES FOR THE 2017-2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

H2474/S1169 “An Act Authorizing Dental Therapists to Expand Access to Oral Health” was introduced for the 2017-2018 legislative session by Senate Majority Leader Harriette L. Chandler and Representatives Smitty Pignatelli and Kate Hogan. This bill is the resubmission of the Dental Hygiene Practitioner bill from the 2015-2016 legislative session. The name change reflects the profession name as identified in the CODA Accreditation Standards for this new profession. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Health and heard at the Joint Committee on Public Health’s public hearing on Tuesday, September 12th, 2017. The MDHA CRP Chair provided oral and written testimony in support of the bill at the hearing.

H1185/S1238 “An Act Relative to Dental Hygienists” was introduced for the 2017-2018 legislative session by Representative Kay Khan and Senator Michael O. Moore. This bill is the resubmission of the nitrous oxide bill that was sent to study in 20016. The proposed legislation would allow hygienists, who have obtained a special permit, to administer nitrous oxide under the direct supervision of a dentist. The educational requirements to obtain the permit would be promulgated by the Board of Registration in Dentistry. Currently, there are thirty-three states that allow dental hygienists to administer nitrous oxide analgesia. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Health and heard at the Joint Committee on Public Health’s public hearing on Tuesday, September 12th, 2017. The MDHA CRP Chair provided oral and written testimony in support of the bill at the hearing.

H580 “An Act Relative to Public Health Dental Hygienists”/S512 “An Act Relative to the Collaborative Agreement of a Public Health Dental Hygienist” were introduced for the 2017-2018 legislative session by Representative John Scibak and Senator Vinny DeMacedo respectively. This resubmitted bill would prohibit dental malpractice insurance companies from denying coverage to dentists solely on the basis that they are collaborative dentists for Public Health Dental Hygienists. The bills have been referred to the Joint Committee on Financial Services. No hearing date has been scheduled.

H613/S1165 “An Act Relative to the Sustainability of Public Health Dental Hygienists through Adequate Reimbursements” was introduced for the 2017-2018 legislative session by Representative Louis Kafka and Senate Majority Leader Harriette L. Chandler. This resubmitted piece of legislation would permit Public Health Dental Hygienists to bill third party insurance carriers. The House bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, and the Senate bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Health. The MDHA CRP Chair provided oral and written testimony in support of H613 at the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing’s public hearing on May 16th, 2017. The MDHA CRP Chair provided oral and written testimony in support of S1165 at the Joint Committee on Public Health’s public hearing on Tuesday, September 12th, 2017.

H2221/S611 “An Act Relative to Oral Health Access for MassHealth Patients” was introduced for the 2017-2018 legislative session by Representative James O’Day and Senator Julian Cyr. This new piece of legislation requires all Massachusetts dentists to accept MassHealth patients and ensure access to essential, affordable oral health care for the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable residents. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. The MDHA CRP Chair provided oral and written testimony in support of H2221/S611 at the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing’s public hearing on May 16th, 2017.

Special thanks go out to all the legislative sponsors of MDHA’s bills. MDHA is also grateful to the Pew Charitable Trusts for their support, and Charles Glick and Kate Saville Worrall from Charles Group Consulting, our lobbyist. Finally, we are the most grateful to all MDHA members for your support and advocacy throughout this entire process. As this legislative session unfolds, we will update you through periodic Legislative Action Alerts. As always, please feel free to contact us at any time with questions or concerns. We are here for YOU!

The Massachusetts Dental Hygienists’ Association Council on Regulation and Practice

Katherine M. Pelullo, RDH, MEd, Chair, Carolyn Wehler, RDH, MPH, E. Jane Crocker, RDH