

2019-2020 Legislative Priorities:

SD1942/HD3436 AN ACT TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH FOR ALL MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS

[Sponsors: Senator Chandler, Rep. Hogan, Rep. Pignatelli]

The proposed legislation would improve access to dental care by creating a midlevel oral healthcare provider, a Dental Therapist, similar to the nurse practitioner model of care. This new provider would expand comprehensive and affordable oral healthcare to thousands of residents, particularly those currently underserved, who are unable to access necessary oral healthcare from a dentist or dental hygienist. The proposed Dental Therapist would be professionally licensed, have earned a degree at an accredited post-secondary institution, practiced under the supervision of a dentist for at least 500 hours, and established a collaborative agreement with a licensed dentist.

Dental Therapists could potentially save the Commonwealth hundreds of thousands of dollars in healthcare delivery costs, as practitioners would be trained, educated, and licensed in providing both preventive and restorative services to meet identified patient needs. By providing care in schools, clinics, and long-term care facilities among other locations, Dental Therapists would reach a diverse patient population and help close the gap in oral healthcare access in the Commonwealth.

SD674/HD2424 AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENISTS THROUGH ADEQUATE REIMBURSEMENTS

[Sponsors: Senator Chandler/Rep. Kafka]

Currently, Public Health Dental Hygienists (PHDHs) can **only bill MassHealth** for the services they provide; this proposed legislation would enable PHDHs to bill private insurance in addition to MassHealth. There are many residents in public health settings who carry private insurance; this bill ensures PHDHs are compensated for their work in classrooms, senior centers and community health centers. In these instances, either these patients are denied the ability to receive preventive dental care, or the PHDH chooses to provide the care free of charge. This is a prime example of the multi-faceted nature of access to care, one that we can easily address. As of January 2016, more than 500,000 Commonwealth residents lived in areas with a shortage of dentists. Holding private insurance does not mean that a patient can easily access adequate dental care. There is a need for PHDHs in the state, and allowing them to accept private insurance will incentivize entrance to the field of public health dental hygiene. A greater number of PHDHs practicing in the Commonwealth will help to alleviate the oral healthcare deficit among our state's most vulnerable populations.

SD574/HD2894 AN ACT RELATIVE TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS

[Sponsors: Sen. Moore/Rep. Khan]

This legislation would enable dental hygienists, who have obtained a special permit, to administer nitrous oxide (a.k.a. laughing gas) to patients under the direct supervision of a dentist. The educational requirements to obtain certification to administer nitrous oxide will be approved by the Board of Registration in Dentistry. Thirty-three other states have passed similar legislation



Massachusetts

Dental Hygienists' Association

and, for over 40 years, dental hygienists have been permitted to administer nitrous oxide to patients under the supervision of a dentist. It has been proven to benefit patients, dental hygienists, and dentists alike. The time has come for the Commonwealth to become the 34th state to allow this safe practice.

**SD333/HD1608 AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT OF A
PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST**

[Sponsors: Sen. deMacedo/Rep. Pignatelli]

This legislation would prevent medical malpractice insurance providers from denying coverage to a dentist simply because he/she is serving as a collaborating dentist for a public health dental hygienist (PHDH). Some providers of malpractice insurance are refusing to offer coverage to dentists who have signed a collaborative agreement with a public health dental hygienist. This practice is unfair and directly discourages dentists from signing a collaborative agreement, due to fear of losing or not being able to obtain required malpractice insurance.

Please contact Katherine Pelullo at Katherine.PelulloRDH@gmail.com with any questions