

## Health Services Committee

September 21, 2016

Chair Lee and members of the Health Services Committee, my name is Rod St. Aubyn representing the ND Dental Hygienists' Association (NDDHA). Unfortunately, all of our Executive Board Members had prior commitments during today's meeting, so I'm presenting their testimony.

We were invited to provide testimony regarding the ability of dental hygienists to perform outreach services and refer patients to a dental home without a dentist on site. We were also asked about recommended legislation to allow outreach services and case management.

Under current regulations and laws, dental hygienists are permitted to provide some services offsite such as schools and nursing homes. Those services include dental cleanings, sealants, and oral cancer screening to name a few. However, in order for the hygienist to work under general supervision a supervising dentist must provide a standing order to that dental hygienist. One of the barriers that dental hygienists encounter in bringing these services to underserved populations is getting a supervising dentist to prescribe the standing orders for these hygienists to work offsite. The NDDHA participated in a task force with the Oral Health Coalition to develop a standard collaborative agreement document which we hoped would encourage this outreach. After several meetings with stakeholders including representatives of the Health Department, dental hygienists, and dentists, it was determined that current regulations and laws already allow for these outreach services and a specific collaborative agreement was not necessary. All parties agreed that each of the professions were to "get the word out to their associations" to encourage these outreach services. While the ND State Health Department and some of the safety net clinics have been successful in working with dentists to write a standing order to allow their employed hygienists to provide outreach services, many hygienists working in private dental offices have been unable to get the support from their supervising dentist at this time.

The NDDHA has worked within our organization to encourage hygienists to ask their supervising dentists for these standing orders to provide more outreach services, but unfortunately we have not heard of any dentists' interest to date. Until dentists and dental hygienists fully understand these options, the outreach opportunities are very limited. We are hopeful that with more education and understanding by both the dentists and the dental hygienists, a greater understanding will be reached to find dental homes for these underserved populations.

Regarding possible legislation, we do not feel that any legislation is necessary to permit these limited outreach services to the underserved populations. As you have heard from previous committee meetings, a bill was considered and defeated for the establishment of an advanced practice dental hygienist (APDH also referred to as a Dental Therapist). The dental therapist would be employed by the dentist to provide more dental procedures and could be utilized to address the underserved populations. But just like the current situation it would be dependent upon acceptance and approval by the supervising dentist. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be willing to try to answer any questions that the committee may have.