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From: Cora Rocha <coastalsmilesllc@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2026 7:59 PM
To: House Corporations Committee
Cc: Rep. Solomon, Joseph J. Jr.
Subject: Written testimony Support for HB 7837

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Testimony in Support of HB 7837
An Act Relating to Insurance — Direct Reimbursement to Public Health Dental Hygienists

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cora Rocha, and I am a licensed public health dental hygienist practicing in Rhode Island. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 7837, which would allow dental insurance companies to directly reimburse public health dental hygienists for services within our scope of practice.

As a public health dental hygienist, I serve patients in community-based settings such as schools, long-term care facilities, and underserved areas where access to dental care is limited or nonexistent. Many of these patients face significant barriers to care, including transportation challenges, financial hardship, and a shortage of dental providers who accept their insurance.

Currently, even though I am licensed and authorized to provide preventive services independently in public health settings, I am unable to receive direct reimbursement from dental insurance companies. This creates unnecessary administrative barriers and limits the sustainability and expansion of preventive oral health services for vulnerable populations.

HB 7837 would:

- Improve access to care by allowing hygienists to deliver and be reimbursed for preventive services directly in community settings
- Increase efficiency by reducing reliance on intermediary billing through dentists who may not be physically present
- Support workforce utilization by enabling dental hygienists to practice to the full extent of their training and licensure
- Promote preventive care which reduces long-term healthcare costs associated with untreated dental disease

Preventive services such as cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, and oral health education are critical in reducing the incidence of dental caries and periodontal disease. When reimbursement barriers exist, these essential services are less likely to reach the populations who need them most.

Allowing direct reimbursement aligns with modern public health practices and reflects a common-sense approach to improving oral health outcomes in Rhode Island. It does not expand scope of practice, but rather ensures fair compensation for services already legally provided.

I urge you to support HB 7837 to strengthen our oral health safety net and ensure equitable access to preventive dental care across our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Cora Rocha, RDH, PHDH
Little Compton, Rhode Island