



RI Department of Health
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Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02908

RE: H 5736 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions -- Dentists and Dental Hygienists

Dear Chair Abney:

Please accept this letter of support for H 5736, legislation that would allow public health dental hygienists to seek reimbursement for dental hygienist services provided in a public health setting from other insurance or third-party payer such as Medicare. Currently, public health dental hygienists are permitted reimbursement from Medicaid and the State's healthcare insurance program, Health Source RI.

In place since 2016, Rhode Island's licensed public health dental hygienists provide preventive dental services in public health settings, including schools, homes, long-term care, and other community-based settings. Licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Health, public health dental hygienists were specifically created in Rhode Island to strengthen access to oral health prevention and early interventions among vulnerable populations.

Currently, public health dental hygienists can only serve Rhode Islanders with Medicaid. This bill would open the door to other insurers to provide this service for their members. As a result, older adults and people with disabilities covered by commercial and Medicare Advantage plans will have increased access to dental hygienist services. Individuals with disabilities have lower rates of going to the dentist, and worse outcomes, such as tooth loss.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important public health legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Justine Caldwell
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy
