



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In Support of House Bill 5736
House Committee on Finance

April 30, 2025

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of AARP Rhode Island and our 125,000+ members in Rhode Island, I am pleased to express support for Representative Caldwell's House Bill 5736, which would permit reimbursement for dental hygienists from "other insurance" or a third-party payor such as Medicare.

The Public Health Dental Hygienist (PHDH) is a Registered Dental Hygienist who is licensed to practice in non-traditional settings with the goal of increasing access to care for underserved populations. Among these populations are those in long term care facilities, and the homebound. At present, the RI Medicaid program may accept claims for services from PHDHs but other insurers may not. This leaves those with other coverage, including commercial insurance through Medicare Advantage plans, unable to obtain services from a mobile provider that can see them where they reside.

AARP policy is that states should amend current scope-of-practice laws and regulations to allow dental hygienists to perform duties for which they have been educated and certified. House Bill 5736 would enable dental insurance companies to consider enrolling and paying Public Health Dental Hygienists.

Public Health Dental Hygienists provide care in non-traditional settings, ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access regardless of transportation, or mobility. Oral health conditions—like untreated cavities, gum disease, and tooth loss—are not inevitable consequences of aging. Access to adequate dental care among older adults can prevent or delay these problems and may lead to overall improvements in health and well-being.

House Bill 5736 would increase access to the important dental services that a PHDH can provide. AARP Rhode Island respectfully asks you to recommend passage on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Netto". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matt Netto
Associate State Director - Advocacy, AARP Rhode Island