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## **Massachusetts Dental Society Files Comprehensive Oral Health Legislation To Ensure Safe, High Quality Care For All**

*Bill provides the Commonwealth with appropriately trained and supervised care from a new classification of oral health professionals and addresses socio-economic barriers to care*

**Southborough, Mass. – January 20, 2017** – The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) today filed legislation that provides a comprehensive approach to oral health care issues facing the Commonwealth. The bill is focused on care for underserved populations, appropriate training and supervision of a new class of dental professionals, and additional resources that can help to address socio-economic barriers that impact Massachusetts residents who want dental care.

“Our bill is designed specifically to bring care to where it is most needed and provide a comprehensive approach to serving populations in need,” said Dr. David Lustbader, DMD, president-elect of the Massachusetts Dental Society. “Anything less will fall short of addressing the critical oral health needs of residents throughout the Commonwealth.”

The proposed legislation calls for connecting MassHealth members and other underserved populations with a new class of professionals called Public Health Dental Practitioners (PHDP), who would be directly supervised by licensed dentists. Similar to licensing in Minnesota, this new class of dental providers must meet standards similar to those mandated for Physicians Assistants and Nurse Practitioners, including two years of post-baccalaureate education.

A comprehensive health bill that addresses several oral health care issues that have been previously identified by the state Department of Public Health, “An Act Relative to Graduate Education for Certain Professionals,” tackles the urgent need for increased awareness about health benefits associated with fluoridated water in public drinking supplies and formal integration of a dental hygiene coordinator within the state’s DPH. The legislation is sponsored by Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury) and Representative Peter Kocot (D-Northampton).

The bill, which calls for mandatory oral health screenings of every child prior to kindergarten, is written to ensure that PHDPs treat underserved populations in areas of Massachusetts that have been designated by the federal government as lacking access to dental care.

“This is an opportunity for Massachusetts to get oral health care right, where others states have been unable to make a real difference,” said Dr. Lustbader.

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