

DATE: February 9, 2012

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Dr. Hal Hale, DDS

RE: HB 2631—Comprehensive Oral Health Initiative

Chairman Landwehr and members of the committee, I am Dr. Hal E. Hale. I am a general dentist who has practiced in Wichita since 1988. I am also the current President of the Kansas Dental Association.

I am speaking in favor of the portion of Kansas House Bill No, 2631 which would create a special volunteer dental license for dentists who are retired from active practice and wish to donate their services for the dental care and treatment of the underserved persons of the state. If enacted, this legislation would have an immediate impact of access to dental care for low-income children and families in our state.

In an effort to increase dental and other healthcare services to the underserved, many states are embracing this type of retired volunteer license. In fact, the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts currently has such a license for the physicians it regulates. According to Kelli J. Stevens, General Counsel for the Board of Healing Arts, there are 998 “exempt” physician licensees. According to the General Counsel, the applicable statute is K.S.A. 65-2809(f) and the applicable regulations are K.A.R. 100-10a-1 through 100-10a-6.

Similarly, the American Dental Association’s Department of State Government Affairs reports that about 39 states allow their state dental boards to issue this type of volunteer license. Of course, the specific details of retired volunteer licenses vary from state to state.

Specifically, the proposal in Kansas House Bill No. 2631 is modeled after Oklahoma legislation. This is found in Section 328.23a of the Oklahoma Dental Practice Act. A summary of the provisions of this license would include:

1. The license would only be issued to dentists who are retired from active practice.
2. The dentist receiving this volunteer license would work in a public health clinic, or similar charitable setting, without pay.
3. The license must be renewed on a yearly basis.
4. The license would be issued without the payment of an application fee, a license fee, or a renewal fee.
5. The license would be issued and/or renewed without any continuing education requirements.
6. To be eligible for the special volunteer license, the dentist must have been previously issued a license to practice dentistry in the state. Moreover, to be eligible, the dentist's license must have never been suspended, revoked, or voluntarily terminated under threat of sanction.

As an example, I would like to talk about my mentor, Dr. Gene Brown. Dr. Brown began practicing dentistry in the early 1960's. He has always been active in charitable dental activities, especially the Sedgwick County Health Department's Children's Dental Clinic. He has served the Children's Dental Clinic not only as a volunteer dentist, but also as the former Coordinator of Volunteer Dentists. He continues to volunteer his time at the Clinic up to this present day. However, Dr. Brown has decided that this year when his license expires, he is not going to renew it. This means that his talents, experience, and passion to help children will be lost to the Children's Dental Clinic. He is just one of many retired dentists who are willing and able, but currently prevented from using their extensive knowledge, skills, and expertise to serve the underserved. By enacting the special volunteer license for retired dentists, these dentists can be used to increase access to dental care for the patients of Kansas.

I greatly appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today. It would be my pleasure to answer any questions at this time.