



SUPPORTS

A. 2341/S.3157 (Paulin/May)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to registered dental hygienists working without supervision but within a collaborative practice agreement with a licensed dentist

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislation, which would increase access to essential dental care by allowing dental hygienists to provide essential dental care in settings accessible to New Yorkers who often face barriers to oral health services.

Dental hygienists are essential oral health providers already embedded in communities across the state. Collaborative practice allows dental hygienists to provide care without direct supervision while maintaining a consulting relationship with a dentist.

Recent research indicates that over 2.8 million New Yorkers live in areas underserved for dental care.¹ Additionally, oral diseases are not equitably distributed across society. People experiencing poverty, living with disabilities, residing in rural communities, seniors, immigrants and refugees, and those from Black, Latino, Asian American and Native American communities and those with complex health conditions continue to suffer disproportionately from oral diseases.²

Many states have already extended the range of services hygienists can offer and the environments in which they can practice, but New York has not kept pace with national trends.^{3,4} Expanding the types of services that dental hygienists can provide and allowing them to practice in more locations is a well-established approach in other states to improve access to oral health care in underserved communities.⁵ Research in these states demonstrates that granting hygienists greater responsibilities leads to better oral health outcomes.⁶ Given ongoing workforce shortages, expanding scope of practice where there is evidence to support doing will be key to ensuring and improving access to oral care.

By allowing dental hygienists to practice in the community, fewer New Yorkers will be forced to endure the pain and health problems that come with poor oral health and untreated dental problems. NYSACHO supports this legislation as a critical step toward addressing the ongoing dental access crisis in communities and populations across New York State.

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¹ Center for Health Workforce Studies. (2024). *Oral Health Needs Assessment for New York State 2024*. School of Public Health, University of Albany. <https://oralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CHWS-Oral-Health-Needs-Assessment-NYS-2024-Final.pdf>

² National Institute of Health. (2021). *Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges*. Section 1 - Community. <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/Oral-Health-in-America-Advances-and-Challenges.pdf#page>

³ Center for Health Workforce Studies. (2024). *Oral Health Needs Assessment for New York State 2024*. School of Public Health, University of Albany. <https://oralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CHWS-Oral-Health-Needs-Assessment-NYS-2024-Final.pdf>

⁴ Langelier, M. et al. (2016). *Development of a New Dental Hygiene Professionals Practice Index by State, 2016*. School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. https://oralhealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/OHWRC_Dental_Hygiene_Scope_of_Practice_2016.pdf

⁵ National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. (2023). *Networks for oral health integration within the maternal and Child Health Safety Net. MCHB-Funded Projects*. <https://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/nohi-overview-profiles>

⁶ Langelier, M. et al. (2016). *Expanded Scopes Of Practice For Dental Hygienists Associated With Improved Oral Health Outcomes For Adults*. Health Affairs, 2207-2215. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1377%2Fhlthaff.2016.0807&mobileUi=0>