



SUPPORTS

A8145/ S6759/ (Peoples-Stokes/Fernandez)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to authorizing the application of topical fluoride varnish to a child's teeth by a parent or legal guardian

The New York State Association of County Health Officials, (NYSACHO), supports the above-referenced legislation which would improve access to oral health interventions for children. Applying fluoride varnish to the teeth of young children has proven to reduce dental disease, but too few children in New York are receiving these preventative treatments. Health care providers routinely instruct parents or guardians on medication administration and other dental and orthodontal related interventions that they can then safely provide for their children. Training and empowering parents in its safe application will increase access to fluoride varnish, a recommendation from the 2022 NYS Early Childhood Oral Health Summit.

Dental disease in children has been called a “hidden epidemic.” Hidden because dental disease is not always apparent until the pain becomes unendurable or until it manifests in an inability to eat, sleep or concentrate in school. More than 14% of children in New York reported one or more oral health problems in 2020-2021. In 2020, only one in every three New York children on Medicaid (32.8%) received a preventive dental visit (national median 41.5%) which includes fluoride varnish. There remain persistent disparities in oral health with minority children and children living in poverty especially affected by poor dental health.

Fluoride varnish is a topical solution applied in less than two minutes without special equipment and with minimal training. Studies show that children who receive fluoride varnish every three months have fewer cavities than those who get it less often or not at all. Fluoride varnish is a standard of practice for dental and pediatric offices and is covered by Medicaid and commercial health insurance.

The legislation will allow providers to train parents to apply fluoride varnish under medical direction and supervision, creating opportunities for children to receive this important preventive service. Preventative public health initiatives are vital to improving the overall health of all people in New York State, especially where geography, income or other factors limit access to oral care providers.

NYSACHO strongly supports this legislation and recommends that it be enacted into law.

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