

House sponsors present

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: Wednesday, February 4th 2015

Contacts: S. Beth Nolan, Voices for Vermont's Children, 802 881 8724,

SBNolan@voicesforvtkids.org

Falko Schilling, VPIRG, 802 338 6779, Falko@vpirg.org

Diverse coalition calls for expanded dental workforce in Vermont

Montpelier, VT – A broad coalition of lawmakers and advocacy organizations have joined together at the State House to voice their support for legislation that would expand Vermont's dental workforce. S.20 and H.1 would allow Licensed Dental Practitioners to provide dental services in the state of Vermont and address dental access issues faced by Vermonters. Licensed Dental Practitioners are a tool to improve access to dental care and bolster economic opportunities in communities across Vermont.

Senator Michael Sirotkin commented on the bills saying "I have represented Vermont seniors on Medicare and Medicaid for 3 decades in the State House. The dentists have continuously and consistently said they could not afford to take new Medicaid patients at the rate Vermont pays. S. 20 seems to be an elegant and Vermont specific solution to the access problem our seniors face for primary and preventative dental care so essential to their good health. In time I think the dental community will appreciate this change, just like doctors have come to find nurse practitioners and physician assistants invaluable to their work and patients."

"As the Executive Director of a clinic for the uninsured and underinsured, access to oral health is the single largest problem facing our patients," said **Peter Youngbaer** the Executive Director of the People's Health and wellness clinic in Barre. "For those with Medicaid, it's virtually impossible to find a dentist willing to take a patient. This is the large gap in capacity of our current Vermont oral health system and workforce. Adding Licensed Dental Practitioners to the oral health team would be the single largest step Vermont could take to providing access to quality oral health care for all Vermonters."

"The licensed dental practitioner will work under the supervision of a dentist, but under general supervision and can go into our communities to provide preventive and restorative dental care to persons with limited access," commented **Sheila Reed**, Associate Director of Voices for Vermont's Children. "The licensed dental practitioner is an exciting addition to the dental team at a time when oral health care is becoming even more difficult for Vermonters to access. In addition, the bill provides a new in-state workforce training opportunity for potential practitioners who want to remain in our communities."

"Dental Practitioners are an innovative tool to improve access to dental care that just makes sense for Vermont," said VPIRG Consumer Protection Advocate **Falko Schilling**. "These providers already offer first class care around the world, and they are a needed solution to expand our state's ageing dental workforce"

Clinical Dental Hygienist **Samantha Petrone** also spoke in favor of adding the new provider to Vermont's workforce. "Dental Practitioners will improve access to affordable, quality oral health care that is becoming unavailable to Vermonters due to an aging population of dentists and