

Good afternoon members of the counsel my name is David Casteel, I am a fourth year dental student at the University of Kansas City, Today I am speaking on behalf of Dental Students throughout the nation. I speak in strong opposition to SB 312.

Proponents of Dental Therapists largely market them as an incredible solution to the access to care issue we face in so many areas nationwide. Barriers to care is a major focus of dental students and their legislative priorities.

Dental therapy has been tried worldwide, but has never survived without significant government subsidization.

The Canadian government created the School of Dental Therapy in 1972 in an attempt to solve the access to care problem across rural Canada. After a nearly 40-year experiment, the last remaining dental therapy program in Canada closed in 2011

Dental therapists do not solve the access to care issue.

In 2009 Minnesota approved dental therapists and the first dental therapists began practicing in 2011. In 2012, 33% of fee for service Medicaid patients and 44% of managed care Medicaid patients received some form of dental treatment. By 2016, 5 years after the inception of dental therapists, those numbers had gone down to 27% and 38% respectively. The following year Minnesota was no longer in compliance with federal standards of the percentage of Medicaid insured children who must receive dental care.

In April of 2017, the federal Department of Health and Human Services sent a letter to the Minnesota Department of Human Services mandating Minnesota to have a plan to increase the percentage of children who receive dental service within 90 days or the federal government would be stepping in.

Minnesota responded to that mandate not with an increase of funding for dental therapists, but with an increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates.

What will be the inspiration for Dental Therapist to practice outside of saturated metropolitan areas? In 2014 the Minnesota Department of Health surveyed practicing Dental Therapists. 65% of the (15/23) of those that reported a single locality of work remained within the Twin Cities. Is this solving the rural access to care problem?

No one hates to see the disparaging cases more then the students who work tirelessly to help the impoverished and children. The access to care issue needs addressed. I caution you on pursuit of this bill. Minnesota's prototype clearly demonstrates that Dental Therapist are ineffective at solving the access to care issue.

*David Castek*