

**Testimony for Nancy Adrianse, BSDH**  
**Before Joint Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2007**

Senator Hatch, Representative Foege and members of the Joint Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity today to speak to you on behalf of dental hygienists from across Iowa. My name is Nancy Adrianse, and I am a Licensed Dental Hygienist practicing here in the Des Moines area. I work for the Des Moines Health Center's Smile Squad School Program, where many of the children we see lack access to a dentist, and therefore, our program comes closest to serving as their dental home. I am the Past President of the Iowa Dental Hygienist's Association and I currently chair the legislative committee for the IDHA.

The Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association is very excited that the leadership of this subcommittee has decided to include implementation of the dental home concept as part of your comprehensive health care reform legislation. IDHA has been a strong supporter of the dental home requirements and has worked closely with various state agencies in the development of the I-Smiles program.

We share your commitment to ensuring every Iowa child has access to quality dental care. All too often, dental hygienists come across young children suffering from extensive and painful tooth decay. Many of these children come from low-income families that don't have access to a dentist. We believe that the I-Smiles proposal best

summarizes the problem of tooth decay and potential solutions to the problem with the following two statements:

1. Tooth decay can be prevented; prevention must begin at an early age.
2. Early access to preventive dental services for children has shown significant cost savings compared to delayed access in later years.

Of course, implementing the I-Smiles proposal won't be easy and it won't be cheap—but IDHA believes that it will save money for the state in the long run, plus it will make Iowa's schoolchildren healthier and better learners. As is noted on page 9 of your proposed legislation, more than 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illnesses—implementing this legislation would significantly reduce that figure.

From my own experience as a dental hygienist serving school-aged kids, I've seen firsthand the problems that the lack of dental care can cause, and the benefits that can be derived when children, along with their parents, receive proper preventative care and dental health education. The goal of the program I work for is to identify children with oral disease and provide parents with information on good oral health habits. On a given day we may identify as many as five children with visible infection and complaining of pain. When following up on these children with the school nurse, we find the number one problem the nurses have is connecting those parents and children with a place to receive oral health treatment.

It is these types of access issues that I-Smiles is designed to address. In the seventeen years that I have been working in Polk County schools our program has seen a drop in referrals for dental problems. In 1989, 67% of the children screened were referred for dental treatment; in 2006 the referral rate is 24%. The screenings and education provided by dental hygienists is making a difference in Polk County.

It is important to note that I-Smiles is a comprehensive proposal and will only succeed if all elements of the proposal are adopted—we can't fund one item of the plan and hope that it will deliver results. Your proposed legislation includes funding for all of these areas, and thus we wholeheartedly support your bill and would not propose any changes.

IDHA looks forward to working with this committee in support of this legislation and in support of its commitment to provide a dental home to Iowa's children.