



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Allow Dental Assistants and LPNs to Apply Fluoride Varnish

A.7402 (People-Stokes)

May 25, 2023

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) is in strong support of A.7402 (Peoples-Stokes) which would allow dental assistants and licensed practical nurses to apply topical fluoride varnish in New York.

CHCANYS is the primary care association for New York's federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs). Located in medically underserved areas, CHCs serve more than 2.3 million patients each year at 800 sites across the State, providing comprehensive primary and preventive care regardless of insurance status, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among CHC patients, 89% are low income, 68% are Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and other people of color, 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

Currently, it is estimated that over 14% of children in New York have an untreated dental issue, which can have serious impacts on patient health and quality of life.¹ Despite this prevalence, only 32.8% of New York children enrolled in Medicaid received a preventative dental visit (which includes fluoride varnish), compared to about 41.5% of children nationally.² Untreated dental issues can have lifelong consequences, as dental disease is correlated with higher risk of chronic disease diagnosis, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.³

Fluoride varnish is a topical solution that can be applied in less than two minutes without specialized equipment or training and is a standard of practice for dental and pediatric offices that is covered by Medicaid and commercial health insurance. Studies have shown that children who receive fluoride varnish are less likely to develop cavities than those that don't.⁴

Allowing dental assistants and licensed practices nurses to apply fluoride varnish is critical to expanding access to dental care and improving the oral health of all New Yorkers. This bill would also help alleviate the significant dental workforce shortages that CHCs are experiencing and who are often the only source of affordable and accessible dental care in underserved communities.

Comprehensive health and well-being cannot be achieved without expanding access to oral health care. CHCANYS strongly urges the New York State Legislature to pass A.7402 (People-Stokes) which will expand access to preventative dental services and help to alleviate New York's dental workforce shortage.

For more information, contact Marie Mongeon, Vice President of Policy: mmongeon@chcanys.org.

¹ <https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/chac/indicators/ora.htm>

² <https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Fluoride-Varnish-Issue-Brief.pdf>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31560644/>

⁴ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/154405910608500211?journalCode=jdrb>