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GEORGIA DENTAL HYGIENISTS' ASSOCIATION

A CONSTITUENT OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL HYGIENISTS' ASSOCIATION

“Registered Dental Hygiene Professionals Promoting Total Health”

COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE DENTAL HYGIENISTS TO PROVIDE SCREENING AND PREVENTIVE ORAL HEALTH CARE TO INDIVIDUALS WITH A DISABILITY

- ❖ The pending **Georgia Senate Bill 78**, would allow dental hygienists to gather information and provide oral hygiene treatment without a dentist present. It is still in collaboration with a dentist.
- ❖ SB78 originated from the mother of the child with disabilities, who happens to be a Registered Dental Hygienist. This mother is constrained by law from providing her own child the preventive oral health services she provides patients in a dental office because the office is unable to serve her child.
- ❖ The Georgia Dental Hygienists' Association (GDHA) did not sponsor nor request the introduction of SB78. However, we believe it is in the best interest of the public and will fulfill a need this profession can provide. **GDHA supports SB78.**
- ❖ Since the opponents of the bill insist on wrongly attributing this bill to GDHA and continue to misrepresent the facts on matters addressed in the bill, GDHA is compelled to correct the inaccuracies, misrepresentations and distortion of facts related to SB78.
 - Our **first** priority is the health and safety of the patients.
 - Identifying health issues that may contraindicate dental hygiene treatment, indicate special procedures or need for consultation with a dentist or physician is part of the dental hygiene standard of care.
 - Many private office patients require antibiotic premedication before cleanings and other procedures due to certain heart problems and other medical conditions. In these cases dental hygienists and dentists both rely on the recommendations of the American Heart Association or the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, which publishes explicit instructions on premedication. The dental hygienist for treatment outside the dental office could request an antibiotic prescription from the patient's physician.
 - Patient management has its challenges, dental hygienists are educated in dealing with different physiological, psychological and behavioral issues
 - While SB78 allows dental hygienists to gather information and provide oral hygiene treatment without a dentist present, it is still in collaboration with a dentist. This bill is currently necessary due to the lack of **any** dental treatment. The bill would allow

dental hygienists to identify those persons in need of immediate dental care thereby allowing the few dentists who do serve this population to be more efficient.

- The preventive and therapeutic services dental hygienists provide can help improve the patient's overall health. Periodontal infection is linked to respiratory disease, poor nutrition, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. These health issues are even more of a concern in individuals that are already compromised.
- This bill is necessary to allow dental hygienists to provide licensed dental hygiene services in nursing homes. Many currently volunteer to provide education, but this cannot substitute for regular care.
- Permitting dental hygienists to provide oral health services for the developmentally disabled would allow dental hygienists to apply for grants and other sources of funding available for this population.
- The current dental care delivery system is two tier—persons who have access to care and persons who don't. Regardless of the setting there is only one standard of dental hygiene care. As licensed professionals all dental hygienists are educated to provide care according to that standard and are subject to disciplinary action against their license if the standard is not met.