



Two Willow Street, Suite 200  
Southborough, Massachusetts 01745-1027  
(800) 342-8747 • Fax: (508) 480-0002  
[www.massdental.org](http://www.massdental.org)

## **Protecting the Most Vulnerable and Ensuring Coverage of Needed Care**

### ***An Act Relative to Anesthesia Coverage for Children Hospitalized for Dental Treatment***

*Bill Sponsors: Senator Frederick E. Berry and Representative Kay Khan*

#### **Proposal**

For young children and persons with developmental disabilities, a visit to the dentist is often not a simple one. These individuals are prone to involuntary movements that can cause serious injury when they occur while a sharp instrument is in the mouth. As a result, many of these patients must be hospitalized and placed under general anesthesia in order to undergo dental procedures.

Unfortunately, some of these patients are forced to delay or forgo treatment because their families cannot afford hospital and anesthesia fees. Many private insurers refuse reimbursement for these costs, citing the procedure as not medically necessary. As a result, the patient does not receive necessary dental care, worsening the condition and causing further pain and suffering.

An Act Relative to Anesthesia Coverage for Children Hospitalized for Dental Treatment seeks to remedy this situation by requiring that private insurers cover the cost of general anesthesia rendered by an anesthesiologist and associated hospital costs. This change would only apply to children under the age of six and the severely developmentally disabled or those having a medical condition that requires hospitalization for dental care procedures. It should be noted that MassHealth currently covers these same costs. Furthermore, this initiative does not represent an increase in income for dentists, but rather ensures that vulnerable patients receive necessary care while covering the cost of general anesthesia administered by an anesthesiologist in a hospital.

According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), thirty other states have similar requirements of private insurers. When Louisiana passed comparable legislation in 1997, the Louisiana Dental Association (LDA) estimated that the bill would increase costs to medical insurance companies by approximately \$2.62 per policyholder. A leading national medical insurance company, in a letter addressed to the executive director of the LDA, indicated that the new law increased the cost of plans by less than 0.2%.

#### **Conclusion**

The Massachusetts Dental Society urges the General Court to take favorable action on this item and require all third party payors to recognize that general anesthesia is necessary for the delivery of dental care to our most vulnerable citizens.

#### **Quick Facts:**

*This bill ensures that general anesthesia and hospital costs are now covered for children 6 and under, and for those with developmental, mental, or physical disabilities.*

*Thirty other states have similar requirements of private insurers.*