



Expanding Access to Care – Retired Dentists Working as Volunteers
An Act Relative to Volunteer Dentistry
Bill Sponsor: Senator Marc R. Pacheco

Proposal

While great strides have been made in ensuring that low-income families in the Commonwealth have access to health care, one area has lagged behind – access to affordable dental care. This measure would give dentists greater ability to volunteer their services to those most in need.

This legislation will allow dentists who have retired and are not deriving income from their profession, to qualify for a volunteer dental license allowing them to volunteer at free health care clinics that serve low-income individuals and those with limited access to care. The volunteer license will have the same requirements as a regular dental license, except that the biennial license fee would be waived. This provision helps to not only protect the public, but also ensure that dentists are not penalized financially for providing fee care.

Additionally, this proposal asks the commissioner of public health to study the impact of existing laws on health care volunteers. While the Free Clinics Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) Medical Malpractice Program appears to address the liability issue and the Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 may also be a viable solution, it is important that all consideration is given to protecting dentists who would become involved in this program.

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Dental Society urges the General Court to take favorable action on this item and help volunteer dentists provide care to those in need.

Volunteer Dentists at Work:
This bill will remove various hurdles that prevent retired dentists from volunteering their time and expertise.

Volunteer dental licensees will be required to comply with the same rules and regulations of regular dental licenses.