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## **MDS Scores Victory in Legislature with Passage of Omnibus Oral Health Bill**

With the official end of the legislative session literally minutes away, lawmakers on Beacon Hill last night (January 6, 2009) approved the Omnibus Oral Health Bill and sent it to Governor Deval Patrick for his signature.

This legislation, which combines elements of three separate bills, not only represents a major victory for the Massachusetts Dental Society, which led the effort to secure passage of the bill, but also more importantly, is a significant step forward in enhancing oral health care for all residents of the Commonwealth.

The MDS appreciates the support of the entire legislature and is especially grateful to the bill's sponsor, Senator Harriette Chandler, and to Representative John Scibak for their leadership on this issue.

The bill creates the position of a full-time state dental director to lead the Office of Oral Health and oversee the Department of Public Health's dental program. It also creates the position of a full-time dental director for the MassHealth program.

In addition, the legislation expands the function of dental assistants, a bill originally filed by the MDS. Dental assistants would now be required to register with the Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID) and be given the opportunity to advance their careers through career ladders and professional tracks that would increase their value as members of the dental team.

The bill also creates opportunities for registered dental hygienists to work in public health settings under the supervision of dentists to increase access to care for underserved populations.

“As leaders in oral health, this legislation reflects the strong commitment of the Massachusetts Dental Society to expanding access to high-quality care,” says MDS President Dr. Milton Glicksman. “As health care professionals, we understand that overall health cannot be achieved without good oral health care. This legislation will help us work toward this important goal, while allowing oral health to take its rightful place in the state’s health care system.”

Passage of the Omnibus Oral Health Bill was one of the 12 goals identified in the MDS’s recently published *Call to Action*, which outlines public policy priorities to be addressed by the Society over the next five years.

For the complete version of the Omnibus Oral Health Bill, please go online to the MDS Web site at [www.massdental.org](http://www.massdental.org).