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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Volunteer Dental License Bill Signed by Governor Patrick

Volunteer dental legislation sponsored by the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) was recently signed into law by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick. Senate bill 2567, An Act Relative to Volunteer Dentistry, was enacted and sent to the governor on July 29, 2010, and was signed on August 9.

This legislation will allow retired dentists, who are not currently deriving income from their profession, to qualify for a volunteer dental license. Upon receipt of this license, dentists will be allowed to volunteer their time providing care in a variety of established, low-income, and free care settings. The creation of volunteer licenses is expected to have an immediate impact on low-income children and families, as retired dentists will have the chance to bring their expertise and skills to free care clinics throughout Massachusetts.

“This bill will provide the necessary access to licensing for retired dentists to volunteer their time and skills to communities who need it most,” says Representative John Scibak (D-Hadley), a co-chairman of the legislative oral health caucus. “Given the current challenging economic conditions and the cut in Adult Dental services in MassHealth, incentives for volunteer dentistry services are needed now more than ever.”

The bill also allows dentists from outside of Massachusetts to receive a volunteer dental license to travel to the Commonwealth for educational or teaching purposes.

“This legislation allows for additional continuing education opportunities through a temporary registration, which will lead to much needed increased economic activity, as out-of-state dentists and their families spend money in our hotels, restaurants, transportation, and entertainment venues while visiting the state,” says Senator Harriette Chandler (D-Worcester), assistant vice-chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

All volunteers will have to comply with existing state rules and regulations to qualify for the license, except that the biennial license fee would be waived. This provision ensures that dentists are not penalized financially for providing free dental care. In addition, those who apply for a volunteer license will have to show proof of licensure in another jurisdiction and document that they are only travelling to Massachusetts for teaching or educational purposes.

Senator Chandler can be reached at (617) 722-1544, and Representative Scibak can be reached at (617) 722-2370.

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The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) is a 5,000-member professional association and statewide constituent of the American Dental Association. Established in 1864, the MDS is an organization dedicated to improving the oral health of the public in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and also advancing the professional development of its membership through initiatives in education, advocacy, and promotion of the highest professional standards.