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Testimony of:

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New York State Academic Dental Centers (NYSADC)

At a Joint Budget Hearing of

The New York State Assembly Committee on Higher Education

and

The New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education

January 28, 2019

11:00AM

Legislative Office Building

Hearing Room B

Albany, New York



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Good afternoon, Chairs Weinstein and Krueger, Chairs Glick and Stavisky and other distinguished members of the New York State Legislature. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Executive proposed budget for fiscal year 2020.

My name is Jonathan Teyan, Chief Operating Officer of the New York State Academic Dental Centers (NYSADC). NYSADC is the consortium of the six dental schools in the state; we and our member institutions collaborate on programs and policies that are of collective interest to the dental schools and that advance oral health in New York State.

New York State's academic dental centers, comprising Columbia University College of Dental Medicine, New York University College of Dentistry, Stony Brook University School of Dental Medicine, Touro College of Dental Medicine, University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine and the Eastman Institute for Oral Health at the University of Rochester, are national leaders in dental education, research and clinical care. These institutions educate and train nearly 2,800 students and residents annually, conduct research to advance our understanding of the causes of disease and develop new treatments, and provide vital patient care to underserved and special needs populations.

Oral health is an essential component of overall wellness and ensuring access to dental services is essential to a robust primary care system. Regular access to quality dental care improves overall health outcomes and reduces costs to the healthcare system by helping to avoid more expensive interventions (oral or otherwise) in the future.¹ The absence of quality dental care can result in serious complications, and can adversely impact not only a person's health, but also their economic and social well-being.²

Access to routine dental care cannot be assured without a steady supply of new dentists. Such a supply depends upon the nation's academic dental centers, which provide both essential educational services to aspiring dentists, and clinical services to individuals within their services areas. In fact, academic dental centers often serve as the primary provider of dental services to underserved populations.

Special Needs Care

People with developmental disabilities can have significant difficulty accessing dental care. Due to their disabilities, many such individuals are often unable to tolerate and cooperate with the dental diagnostic and treatment experience, leading to significant delays in receiving care. Patients with moderate disability can sometimes be treated in conventional dental offices; however, access to dental care is further complicated because these patients often require public assistance through Medicaid, and

¹ See e.g., The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Pew Children's Dental Campaign issue Brief: A Costly Dental Destination*, 2012 (available at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2012/01/16/a-costly-dental-destination.pdf>)

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, 2000, p. 133 et seq.



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because not all dentists participate in Medicaid. New York State's academic dental centers have long been safety nets for underserved and vulnerable populations, averaging nearly 400,000 Medicaid visits annually – 35,000 of which comprise developmentally disabled or medically compromised (e.g. HIV positive) patient visits.

Dental Faculty Shortage

Recruitment of highly qualified dental faculty is increasingly competitive. In 2016, there were 271 open full-time dental faculty positions nationwide.³ Of those vacant positions, 128 were vacant for more than six months.⁴ New York State shoulders a disproportionate share of total U.S. vacancies, with 66 unfilled dental faculty vacancies at present. Of note, New York State allows for limited licensure for foreign-trained dentists serving on faculty at dental schools in the state; elimination or diminution of such licensure would exacerbate the vacancy problem.

NYSADC surveys of the dental schools have shown that schools can take as long as three years to fill a full professor vacancy, but often assistant professor spots are open for six months. There is growing concern that recent graduates of U.S. dental schools are extremely unlikely to pursue faculty positions. In a recent survey of exiting dental school graduates, only 0.5% said that they were interested in pursuing a career in academic dentistry.⁵

The reasons for the relatively high number of vacancies are varied and complex and include such factors as a candidate's ability to meet the rigorous requirements of faculty positions, and time and resource constraints on scholarly pursuits. However, it should be noted that, according to the annual ADEA Survey of Vacant Budgeted Faculty positions, salary considerations have consistently ranked among the top reasons that faculty positions remain unfilled.⁶

The recruitment of faculty at New York State's dental schools – and their counterparts across the country – has increasingly been a challenge as the average indebtedness of U.S. dental school graduates has grown to nearly \$250,000⁷, and the salary gap between academia and private practice has widened. The average annual net income was \$174,780 for private general practitioner dentist and \$322,200 for a specialist.⁸ Compared to an average FY2014 salary from an academic dental school of \$93,667, **this creates a pay gap that is difficult to bridge.**

³ ADEA Survey of Dental Faculty 2016-2017

⁴ ADEA Survey of Dental Faculty 2016-2017

⁵ ADEA Survey of Dental Faculty 2012-2013

⁶ Garrison, G. et al. 2014. Dental School Vacant Budgeted Faculty Positions, Academic Years 2008-09 to 2010-11. Journal of Dental Education. <http://www.jdentaled.org/content/78/4/638.abstract?sid=c279cca8-edde-40b3-9e93-d865c81d82dd>

⁷ According to the American Dental Education Association, in 2014, the average educational debt per graduating dental school senior was \$247,227.

⁸ American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute Research Brief: General Practitioner Dentist Earnings Down Slightly in 2014. http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIBrief_1215_1.pdf?la=en



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In addition to the critical need for additional dental faculty, there is also a nationwide shortage of dentists that appears to only get worse as the current dental professional population ages and the number of students in dental schools remains stagnant. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) estimates that there is currently a shortage of 7,300 dentists in the US.⁹ New York is predicted to have one the greatest shortfalls by 2025, having 1,024 fewer full-time dentists than is needed to meet the state's needs.¹⁰ This severe shortfall will have the largest effect on those who are already in underserved areas and for whom the need is highest.

Restricted Dental Faculty Licensure

The Restricted Dental Faculty Licensure statute was first enacted in 2008 (Chapter 537) to allow highly-qualified, foreign-trained dental educators and researchers to teach at New York's six academic dental centers and participate in faculty practice plans through the centers. The current statute is due to sunset in February 2021. To be eligible for this category of licensure, a faculty member must be employed full time at the rank of Assistant Professor or higher at one of the six centers. The license is valid only while the faculty member is employed at the academic dental center that sponsored the individual, and only allows the faculty member to practice within the context of the academic dental center. In order to qualify for such licensure, an individual must have at least six years of pre-professional and professional education, which includes the same coursework required of a dentist licensed through the non-restricted pathway.

Prior to its passage, New York's academic dental centers were facing significant challenges recruiting talented dental faculty members because New York State law did not provide a mechanism for dentists trained outside the U.S. to practice dentistry on a limited basis without obtaining a full dental practice license from the State. Talented foreign-trained faculty members were therefore opting to teach and practice in other states, depriving New York's academic dental centers of their talents and leaving the state at a significant competitive disadvantage with respect to recruitment. This problem was compounded by the fact that faculty recruitment is already a significant challenge for dental centers, with high retirement rates among current faculty and a salary differential between private practice and academia that is approximately 3:1.

The Restricted Dental Faculty Licensure statute has significantly benefitted New York State's academic dental centers and has ensured their competitiveness in recruiting the talent necessary to provide the highest quality dental education. At present, there are approximately 50 dental faculty members using restricted licenses at New York State's six academic dental centers. These faculty members on average devote 75 percent of their time to teaching and research, underscoring that the statute has accomplished what it was intended to do.

¹⁰ National and State-Level Projection of Dentists and Dental Hygienists in the U.S., 2012-2025, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis; February 2015.



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If the statutory authority for the restricted dental faculty license is allowed to sunset, distinguished faculty members will be forced to leave their positions and, as a result, the quality of dental education and the operations of the New York State's academic dental centers will be jeopardized.

We urge the Legislature to support dental faculty recruitment and retention by making the Restricted Dental Faculty Licensure provision permanent.

New York State Dental Faculty Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program

The New York State Dental Faculty Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program would be available to New York State licensed dentists who have accepted a full-time faculty or clinical adjunct faculty position at a dental school in New York State (including both pre- and post-doctoral dental programs). Successful candidates will receive up to \$40,000 in loan repayment or forgiveness for each year in which they serve as a faculty member in such a New York State dental school, with a minimum service commitment of two continuous years at the same dental school in New York State. Candidates may receive this award for up to four years for a maximum lifetime award of \$160,000 or until all New York State and federal loans have been discharged.

In concert with the loan forgiveness incentive program, New York State's dental schools would establish academic and mentoring initiatives to provide a clear pathway for dental faculty who are loan forgiveness recipients to continue academic careers. These leadership tracks, which would be funded by the dental schools and demonstrate their commitment to the objectives of this program, would include academic guidance, mentorship opportunities and other initiatives to provide a clear pathway for loan forgiveness recipients to continue careers in academic dentistry.

Implementing this program would provide clear incentive to dentists pursuing careers in academia at New York State's dental schools and improve the state's competitive position with respect to the recruitment and retention of dental educators.

We urge the Legislature to support the New York State Dental Faculty Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program with a \$350,000 appropriation in the fiscal year 2020 budget.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued support for academic dentistry. I welcome any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Teyan
Chief Operating Officer
New York State Academic Dental Centers



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