



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Passes Legislation to Expand Access to Dental Care in Underserved Communities

CATHARINE YOUNG May 23, 2017

| ISSUE: **CHILDREN'S HEALTH, HEALTH & WELLNESS, HEALTH EQUITY**

ALBANY – Untreated oral diseases can lead to serious health consequences and even life threatening medical emergencies.

To expand treatment options and address the continued shortage of dentists in underserved areas, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District) has passed legislation authorizing dentists to be added to the extremely successful “Doctors Across New York” program.

Senator Young’s bill, [S.3939](#), provides the Department of Health (DOH) the tools to open greater dental services up to underserved areas by enabling dentists to be recruited and receive financial incentives to work in communities that currently lack dentists.

“We have a real shortage of dentists in both rural areas and inner-cities, which creates a serious public health problem. Left untreated, oral ailments can be the catalyst for serious medical conditions, including heart disease and diabetes, along with tooth loss that can easily result,” said Senator Young.

“Since the founding of the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program with the University at Buffalo, I have met countless young children who, when left without access to dental care, have begun

developing serious conditions because of poor dental hygiene habits. The long-term negative health implications abound, and we need to find new ways to encourage dentist to practice in our region, and across the state,” Senator Young said.

According to The Pew Charitable Trusts, in 2013 nearly 16 million low-income children went without dental care, resulting in 215,000 children being admitted to emergency rooms for otherwise preventable dental issues, costing more than \$104 million.

“We should be providing dentists with education loan forgiveness in exchange for a commitment to practice in an underserved community, as we do doctors. There is a need to cultivate a new generation of practitioners who can care for our rural communities. The legislation would increase the availability of important dental services, helping people avoid a lifetime of medical problems,” Senator Young said.

“I urge the Assembly to join us in passing this important public health initiative for the sake of our children, and all those living in underserved areas of New York,” she said.

In this year’s state budget, Senator Young successfully secured \$350,000 to support two programs that are currently being used to address the ongoing shortage of dental care in rural areas of New York State.

A partnership between Senator Young and the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, the Rural Dentistry Pilot Program provides mobile dental services to children in the rural communities that make up Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. This year Senator Young secured \$250,000 to support the services provided to approximately 30 schools and several Head Start locations within the region.

Senator Young also obtained \$100,000 to fund a rural dental demonstration program that is conducted by the New York State Dental Association (NYSDA). The program sponsors free

dental clinics for at-risk populations in four or five Federally Qualified Health Centers located in different rural areas of New York State.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2017-S3939

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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[Expands the Doctors Across New York program to include dentists](#)

January 30, 2017

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by [Catharine Young](#)

Do you support this bill?