

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1174

Introduced by Assembly Member Bocanegra

February 22, 2013

An act relating to oral health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1174, as introduced, Bocanegra. Oral health: virtual dental homes.

Existing law, the Dental Practice Act, establishes the Dental Board of California. Existing law creates, within the jurisdiction of the board, a Dental Hygiene Committee of California, that is responsible for regulation of registered dental hygienists, registered dental hygienists in alternative practice, and registered dental hygienists in extended functions.

This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would incorporate into law the new duties of dental assistants and dental hygienists being tested in a specified pilot project and address barriers to expanding the Virtual Dental Home system of care, as specified, as a cost-effective mechanism to improve the oral health of California's most underserved and vulnerable citizens.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares the
- 2 following:
- 3 (1) Significant portions of California's population suffer from
- 4 significant oral health disparities. Untreated dental disease can

1 have serious consequences for overall health and the ability to be
2 a productive member of society.

3 (2) Reports from the United States Surgeon General and the
4 Institute of Medicine of the National Academics indicate that these
5 oral health disparities tend to be concentrated in people with low
6 incomes, disadvantaged children, individuals with disabilities and
7 chronic medical conditions, dependent older adults, and people
8 living in rural areas.

9 (3) Approximately one-fourth of all children in California have
10 never visited a dental office and two-thirds of all children in the
11 state suffer from poor oral health by the time they reach the 3rd
12 grade.

13 (4) Low-income adults no longer have coverage under the state’s
14 Denti-Cal program for other than emergency services and too many
15 of them are stigmatized by having missing teeth, miss work because
16 of dental infections, or end up in hospital emergency departments.

17 (5) A new model of delivering oral health services, called the
18 Virtual Dental Home, has been demonstrating a community-based,
19 prevention-focused, telehealth-facilitated system of care in
20 California, supported by the Health Workforce Pilot Project No.
21 172, administered by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and
22 Development.

23 (6) The Virtual Dental Home system of care brings care to
24 community locations where the most underserved and vulnerable
25 children and adults receive educational, social, and general health
26 services. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention and
27 targets those at highest risk for developing dental disease. This
28 system delivers oral health at a very low cost per child or adult
29 and has the potential to save the state overall oral health expenses.

30 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to
31 incorporate the new duties of dental assistants and dental hygienists
32 being tested in the Health Workforce Pilot Project No. 172 into
33 law and to address barriers to expanding the Virtual Dental Home
34 system of care as a cost-effective mechanism to improve the oral
35 health of California’s most underserved and vulnerable citizens.

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