

***Health Care Committee***

***SSB 6020***

***Brief Description:*** *Establishing a school sealant endorsement program for dental hygienists.*

***Sponsors:*** *By Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Thibaudeau, Deccio and Costa).*

***Hearing Date:*** *3/23/01*

***Staff:*** *John Welsh (786-7133).*

***Background:***

*A recent oral health survey conducted by the Department of Health found that among second grade children in the state, dental problems have worsened in the last five years. In 1995, when the department conducted its first oral health survey, 6 percent of the children with decay were not being treated. Parents of Head Start kids named dental problems as their number one health concern.*

*Studies have found that children with sealants experience one fourth of the decay of those who do not have sealants, when they are applied properly. Under current practice, dental hygienists can apply sealants only under the general supervision of a licensed dentist.*

***Summary of Bill:***

*The Legislature finds that access to preventive and restorative oral health services are restricted by regulation and that children are unnecessarily suffering from dental disease. The Legislature intends to address the problem of poor access to low-income children by providing for school-based sealant programs.*

*The Secretary of the Department of Health is authorized to create a school sealant endorsement program for dental hygienists and dental assistants.*

*Dental hygienists licensed as of the effective date of this act may assess for and apply sealants, and apply fluoride varnishes to low-income, rural and other at-risk children in school sealant programs without completing the department's sealant program. A dental*

*hygienist licensed after the effective date of this act must complete the department's school sealant program first.*

*Dental assistants who have worked under the supervision of a licensed dentist for at least 200 hours may apply for endorsement by the department to apply sealants and fluoride varnishes to low-income children in schools. Dental assistants practicing as of the effective date of this act may apply sealants in school programs under the general supervision of a dentist without completing the endorsement program.*

***Appropriation:*** *None.*

***Fiscal Note:*** *Available.*

***Effective Date:*** *Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.*