

Dr. Brian D. Smith, Superintendent
Unified School District #499 Galena

Committee on Public Health and Welfare

February 1, 2012

SB 326 - Dental Hygiene Services for School Children

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Chairwoman Schmidt and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on SB 326, which would allow more oral health opportunities for currently underserved children.

The Galena School District takes pride in the oral health services that we have been able to provide our students over the last several years with the assistance of Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas. When our community lost our only dentist, we were scrambling to find someone to assist us in meeting our basic statutory dental examination requirements. As a Dental Champion, I had fortunately established a network with many oral health care professionals and the staff of Oral Health Kansas. They brought the Community Health Center and my district together. From that point, we went from a district barely meeting the minimum statutory requirements to one that serves all of the oral health needs for many of our students. Last year, the oral health care needs of over 300 students were met, however we still have work left to do.

There are still many districts like Galena that are struggling to meet basic oral health statutory requirements. One reason is the shortage of dentists in the state. That problem could be eased if more freedom were granted to allow hygienists access to more children. By adding the provision that students could be served who "*...have not been seen by a dentist during the previous 12 months for dental examination...*," more students would have access to oral health care. This would be a proactive measure to prevent future problems leading to absenteeism, and in some cases, secondary health infections that have more grave outcomes.

At Galena, we have made oral health a priority for our students. I believe Senate Bill 326 will have the same impact in other schools across the state of Kansas, and be a model for other states to follow. I stand ready to assist the Legislature in any way I can to support the passage of this Bill. Thank you.