

A Bill to establish a Vermont Comprehensive Dental Care Program

by Lee Webb

It is the purpose of this bill to create a comprehensive dental care program to cover the dental health needs for all Vermonters as a step towards an adequate level of overall health for all Vermonters who cannot afford the existing cost of dental care and have found such care unavailable in the state.

The bill is divided into four separate sections:

- A. Services and Structure
- B. Eligibility
- C. Structure of Dental Care Delivery System
- D. Funding

Section A Services and Structure of Program

The extent of eligible treatment would include comprehensive dental services including examination, diagnosis, health education, x-rays, remedial care, preventive services and procedures, and continuity of services through recall and follow-up.

This bill establishes a Vermont Comprehensive Dental Care Administration to administer and carry out this program in all ways. It is authorized to hire dentists and other professional staff, open and maintain clinics, set up necessary training programs, enter into contracts, and receive state tax monies expressly authorized for this purpose.

The Dental Care Administration will be headed by a Secretary to be appointed by the Governor. Policy for the Administration will be set and determined by a seven member board also appointed by the Governor. At least three of the members of the board shall be either men or women. The board is to be made up of representatives from poor people's organizations, labor unions, the dental profession, and other health consumers.

Section B Eligibility

All workers and their immediate families would be eligible for free comprehensive dental care under this program. This care is to be provided through special dental care insurance that all employers of one or more employees in the State of Vermont must contract with the Vermont Dental Care Administration for. All costs of this coverage are to be borne by the employer and are not to be passed on to the employees.

All Vermont residents with an income below the then current United States Bureau of Labor Statistics figure for an adequate standard of living would also receive free comprehensive dental care under this program. The present Bureau of Labor Statistic figure for an adequate standard of living is \$6900 for a family of four. Any person already covered or eligible for dental care under a federal program, such as Medicare or Medicaid, would receive her/his coverage under the federal program as long as it remains available. In such cases the Vermont Dental Care Administration would supplement services to any federal program that did not reach the Vermont level of comprehensive coverage.

In cases of overlap between coverage by employers and coverage for people with incomes below the BLS standard, coverage shall be assumed to be through the employer. (This is aimed at those people who work but make less than the BLS standard.)

All dental services under the Program are completely free of charge to all Vermont residents who are eligible under the provisions of Section B.

#### Section C Structure of Dental Care Delivery System

The Vermont Comprehensive Dental Care Administration shall establish cooperative community clinics in at least 40 separate sites throughout the state of provide the dental services available under this program.

Each clinic shall include facilities and staff for basic and remedial dental care. Each clinic should also include staff and facilities for establishing a public education program on preventive dental care to be carried on in the surrounding communities.

Each clinic of the State Administration itself should also operate a number of mobile dental clinics to provide basic dental care to people unable to travel, the smallest communities, or others in special or unusual situations that would prevent them from coming to the clinic.

The local community clinics shall be administered under the supervision of local boards composed of seven people who live in the area the clinic services. They are to be appointed by the Program's Administrator. Working people, poor people's organizations, labor unions, other health consumers, and dental professionals and para-professionals shall compose the board. The local community boards shall administer the community clinics according to guidelines prepared by the State Board.

The Vermont Comprehensive Dental Care Administration shall also contract with dental professionals and para-professionals in private practice for whatever professional services are determined as needed by the program.

Section D Funding of the Program

The costs of the Comprehensive Dental Care Program shall be met by revenue raised from:

- a) a 10% tax on all capital gains realized by the selling of land purchased within the preceding ten years.
- b) a license fee for the operation of a commercial ski lift ranging between \$30,000 and \$70,000 depending on the rated capacity of that ski lift.

These taxes would be collected by the Vermont State Tax Department and handed over to the Dental Care Administration monthly.

Special provisions prepared by the Board should relieve the burden on small employers by the cost of covering their employees by preparing and sliding scale for the small employers.

Special provisions prepared by the Board should permit any Vermont resident even though they are not eligible under the provisions of the program to buy into the program at cost for a monthly fee. This should be available on a sliding scale by income.

The Administration shall attempt to utilize all federal monies available for dental care, training of professional and paraprofessionals, establishing clinics, purchasing of medicines, and other purposes.

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