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Good morning. I am Peter Galbraith.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning in favor of Senate Bill S20.

The number of Vermonters that go without dental care and suffer the associated pain and humiliation is not only unacceptable, but it is something we can resolve.

A little history, I did a Dental Residency at what was the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont and subsequently established a private practice of dentistry in Burlington.

As a consultant to Head Start in 1968 I saw children who gargled with kerosene to alleviate a toothache; teenage girls who longed for their 16th birthday so that they could get all their teeth removed and replaced with full dentures.

Hopefully we will not return to those days.

We responded to that dental crisis by creating the private non-profit, Vermont Dental Care Program and the Tooth Fairy Program.

Vermont Dental Care had 8 portable dental clinics serving thousands of children from a church basement in Newport to the Molly Stark elementary school in Bennington and many communities in between.

We are looking at the option of restoring a statewide Vermont Dental Care Program to provide access to the thousands of Vermonters currently going without care; however, I would rather see a more sustainable approach, the Licensed Dental Practitioner.

Unlike the Vermont Dental Care Program, the licensed dental practitioner will be under the control of private dentists and easily integrated into existing practices.

It is working in the US and around the world, despite what you are hearing from the Dental Society and the American Dental Association (ADA). The ADA has been fighting this innovation since they shut down a successful program 50 years ago.

Some Vermont dentists treat Medicaid patients. Some treat very few or none at all, which I believe is unprofessional and unconscionable.

In my conversations with the Vermont State Dental Society and dentists, I hear two major objections. They worry about the quality of care and believe that the Licensed Dental Practitioner option is not viable economically.

There is extensive research demonstrating that the dental care performed by licensed dental practitioners is comparable to that of dentists.

Poor quality of care as a risk, simply is not supported by study after study.

Similarly, the economic viability of this healthcare model has been clearly established in the United States and around the world.

Unfortunately, as with some other health care issues, the US lags behind other countries in offering modern comprehensive dental care.

Vermont can once again offer national leadership and begin by creating the Licensed Dental Practitioner.

This would be welcomed by so many Vermonters whose only option is temporary relief of pain in an emergency room.

Thank you for your consideration.