Over 60 Massachusetts Organizations Support Dental Therapists

**What is a Dental Therapist?** A Dental Therapist is a trained professional - like a nurse practitioner in the medical team - who delivers basic dental care to underserved populations. Dental therapists work under a dentist’s supervision, providing routine and preventive dental care. Along with increasing access to dental care, a dental therapy program would support dynamic career opportunities for underrepresented groups in dentistry.

**Dental Therapists provide quality care.** Dental Therapists bring care directly to people in schools, nursing homes, and other community settings, and are currently providing safe, high-quality preventive and routine restorative care in several states and more than 50 countries around the world. The Commission on Dental Accreditation, which creates educational standards for dental professionals, has completed extensive research on dental therapists and concluded that they provide high quality, safe care.

**Dental therapists reduce emergency visits.** Dental Therapists are an important tool to reduce the number of people who go to expensive hospital emergency rooms for preventable oral health conditions. In 2014, there were 36,000 preventable oral health-related ER visits, costing some $15-$36 million. The Health Policy Commission found that dental therapists can significantly reduce ER utilization for oral health.

**Dental Therapists will make a difference in Massachusetts.** Oral health is critical to overall health, yet Massachusetts lacks sufficient dental care for children, seniors and people with special needs. More than 530,000 people in Massachusetts live in areas with a shortage of dentists. Over 284,000 kids — 47% of children on MassHealth — did not see a dentist in 2015. Dental therapists expand the reach of the dental care team by providing routine care, allowing dentists to see more patients with complex needs. Authorizing dental therapists in Massachusetts would provide critical care to those in need.

**Support H. 2474: An Act Authorizing Dental Therapists to Expand Access to Oral Health**

Health Care For All · www.hcfama.org
Plus these supporters as well: Boston College Immigration Integration Lab; StepRox Recovery Support Center.