

## **Rochester Post Bulletin: Dentists' group blasts lawmaker's plan**

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By [Heather J. Carlson](#)

The Minnesota Dental Association on Monday launched a statewide ad blitz targeting a Rochester lawmaker's proposal that would create a mid-level dental practitioner.

The association is running print, radio and Web ads in markets across the state. A full-page ad that ran in Monday's Post-Bulletin featured a dental patient with his mouth being worked. Above the photo in large type it read -- "The last thing you want to hear when you're getting dental care is 'uh-oh.'" The ad urges readers to call Sen. Ann Lynch, DFL-Rochester, and tell her "unsupervised workers doing dental surgery is a bad idea."

Other newspaper and radio ads urged people to contact their lawmakers.

### **Oral health practitioner**

The ads center around Lynch's proposal that would create an oral health practitioner license. Practitioners would have to be licensed dental hygienists and complete a special master's program. They would be allowed to do diagnoses and treatment plans, pull teeth, fill cavities and prescribe certain medications. The idea is to improve access to dental care, especially in rural areas. It was based on recommendations by the state Oral Health Practitioner Work Group. The Minnesota Dental Association fiercely opposes the proposal saying it would put patients' safety at risk.

Lynch called the dental association's ads "misleading."

The ads "are trying to provoke fear in Minnesotans that is unfounded and frankly, I'm disappointed in the tactics that the MDA has chosen to use," she said.

She said her bill would require that dentists supervise dental practitioners, although a dentist would not have to be on site. The ad says the dental worker would have no training from an accredited dental school. That is technically correct, but Lynch said this is the first program of its kind in the nation and Metropolitan State University has been working on a curriculum plan.

Carol Embertson, an association spokeswoman, declined to release how much money the association is spending on the ad campaign.

### **Local blitz**

Association ads started running Monday on Rochester radio stations owned by Cumulus Media, said operations manager Brent Ackerman.

Lewiston dentist Dr. Michael Flynn, speaking on behalf of the dental association, said Lynch's proposal poses a serious threat to public safety. Flynn treats 1,000 patients a year on state assistance and said he knows the needs of the patients the bill aims to help, including people in nursing homes. He said he believes the program would not offer enough training and is concerned it would not be done at the accredited University of Minnesota School of Dentistry. Dentists would not be required to be on-site, which he said could be a problem if something goes wrong.

"It comes back to how much can we train in a short period of time, and I am not convinced that the OHP has the proper amount of training designed into it's curriculum," Flynn said.

He backs a proposal from Rep. Kim Norton, DFL-Rochester, to start a "dental therapist" program through the University of Minnesota. A dentist would have to be on-site to perform procedures, and therapists would be limited in what they could do and would not be allowed to pull adult teeth.

Lynch said the two proposals do not have to compete and could both move forward. In fact, her bill has been amended to include both of the proposals. As for her proposal, Lynch said there is no evidence that oral health practitioners would endanger patients.