



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE PROFESSIONAL  
LICENSURE COMMITTEE  
HB 2727: HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONER IDENTIFICATION BADGE ACT  
OCTOBER 23, 2008  
THOMAS W. GAMBA, DDS  
PRESIDENT, PENNSYLVANIA DENTAL ASSOCIATION**

Good afternoon, Chairman Sturla, Representative Killion and members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Thomas Gamba. I am a general dentist practicing in Philadelphia and the President of the Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of more than 5,500 members who are licensed to practice dentistry in Pennsylvania about HB 2727, the Health Care Practitioner Identification Badge Act.

PDA appreciates the legislature's overriding concern to protect patients by ensuring that only qualified individuals licensed or certified by the state provide treatment. PDA certainly does not condone the actions of unqualified individuals falsifying their identities and placing patients' health and lives at risk. We understand that HB 2727 was introduced to prevent the occurrence of incidents such as baby kidnapping and inappropriate dispensing of medication. However, PDA is concerned about the practical

application of requiring identification badges for those individuals in the dental profession.

PDA understands that the genesis of this legislation is to prevent identity fraud in large clinical and hospital settings. However, the preponderance of dentists are small business owners and solo practitioners. They usually have a small number of staff and work in more confining areas than hospitals or other larger health care facilities. Most dentists have less than 10 employees. PDA believes that an identification badge would not be necessary in this type of setting, where it is virtually impossible for individuals to fraudulently work as dental personnel. PDA urges the Committee to consider amending HB 2727 to include the following language found in North Carolina statute: *“The badge or other form of identification is not required to be worn if the patient is in the health care practitioner’s office, and the name and license of the practitioner can be determined by the patient from a posted license, a sign in the office, or a brochure provided to patients, or otherwise.”* This provision could be specific to the dental profession.

There are two other points PDA would like the Committee to consider:

- PDA is concerned about the potential risks of cross contamination between patients, who are often laying prone in dental chairs with a dentist or other dental team member leaning over them to provide treatment. Because of the close contact, it is feasible that a patient’s saliva or blood containing microorganisms

could transfer to the name badge and then to another patient. The name badge will not be sterilized like the dental instruments used during treatment.

- PDA also questions whether the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs currently has the capacity to handle the issuance of identification badges to all health care professionals or if additional staff will need hired. With a weakening economy, PDA cautions against raising licensure and certification fees to process identification badges and possibly hire additional staff.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today about HB 2727. PDA appreciates your careful consideration of its request to exempt individual dental practitioners' offices from this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.