§ 2958-a. Rural dentistry pilot program. 1. The commissioner shall, within monies appropriated therefore, establish a rural dentistry pilot program in Chautauqua, Allegany, and Cattaraugus counties. The commissioner shall, in coordination with the University of Buffalo School of Dentistry study cost savings achieved through the provision of dental services in geographically isolated and underserved areas. Such a study shall determine:

(i) the quality of care provided through a mobile dental system, including minimizing any adverse effects on dental practices already serving or seeking to enter rural or underserved communities, the involvement of dental practices serving rural or underserved communities in such a mobile dental system, and the establishment of referral systems and networks to existing dental practices serving rural or underserved communities for regular ongoing care of patients;

(ii) cost savings achieved through targeted oral health initiatives in rural areas;

(iii) corollaries between preventative dental care and improved patient outcomes in rural areas;

(iv) knowledge, attitude, and behavior outcomes among dental students and recommendations for rural dental health education curriculum;

(v) a profile of the participants, the number of persons served, and health care disparities;

(vi) a description of the activities of the program;

(vii) guidance on facilitated participation in rural areas;

(viii) provider shortages in rural areas;

(ix) a description of the impact of the programs on the community and recommendations for replication/improvement in other rural areas; and

(x) such other activities as the commissioner may deem necessary and appropriate to this section.

2. Twelve months after the approval of the rural dentistry pilot program, and annually thereafter, the program shall report to the commissioner on the progress of the program. The commissioner shall evaluate the findings of the study and report to the governor, the temporary president of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, the chair of the senate standing committee on health, the chair of the assembly health committee and the chair of the legislative commission on

rural resources on its findings.

3. Additionally, to the extent of funds appropriated therefore, medical assistance funds, including any funding or shared savings as may become available through federal waivers or otherwise under titles eighteen and nineteen of the federal social security act, may be used for expenditures in support of the demonstration program.

4. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of law to the contrary, the commissioner is authorized to waive, modify or suspend the provisions of rules and regulations promulgated pursuant to article twenty-eight of this chapter if the commissioner determines that such waiver, modification or suspension is necessary for the successful implementing of the rural dentistry pilot program authorized pursuant to this section and provided that the commissioner determines that the health, safety and general welfare of people receiving health care under such rural dentistry pilot program will not be impaired as a result of such waiver, modification, or suspension.