

Testimony of Lorraine Klug, RDH for LD 258: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

Before the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the Health and Human Services Committee

Public Hearing: February 22, 2022

Senator Rotundo, Senator Baldacci, Representative Sachs, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Lorraine Klug and I am President of the Maine Dental Hygienists Association . I'm testifying today to encourage the Committees to add the necessary funding into the budget to ensure Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program has the resources to expand to all schools by 2025, as enacted last legislative session.

At least half of Maine kids are currently not accessing preventive care in traditional dental office settings, and there are very few dental offices taking new patients, especially with MaineCare, and most of those that do typically have at least a 6 month to a year wait for appointments. The School Oral Health Program fills a critical gap in the system, by ensuring that all kids have the opportunity to receive at least a screening and fluoride varnish, and assistance with follow up referrals as needed. No child should go without preventative dental services and the school setting is the perfect place to allow access for all. Unlike the private practice, you don't have to worry about transportation and appointment failure issues which is a problem with many families.

About 1 in 4 children screened by the program this fall were identified with active decay, and this proportion could be significantly higher in schools where the SOHP has not been available as the decay rates tend to improve once schools have had the services for a few years. Sealants and fluoride for every child in school would greatly reduce this statistic.

We need to take care of our most vulnerable citizens and provide preventative dental services to those who don't have a dental home. Our private practice offices are overwhelmed with patients and the school system is the prefect setting to provide necessary services.

It is very important that we fund the expansion of this critical program. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on this important issue.