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Testimony of Jeffrey A. Stone, DO 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 Dr. Jeff Stone. I have been a pediatrician for 30 years in my hometown of Waterville and am the founder of Waterville Pediatrics and on the Board of Directors for the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. 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.

As a pediatrician I repeatedly saw the devastation that results with a lack of adequate access to dental care in my patients. I would see kids with multiple dental cavities, painful teeth, and tooth abscesses due to inadequate or nonexistent dental care. It is heartbreaking to see these children suffering when it could have been prevented.

I have been involved with organizations such as From The First Tooth and the Children's Oral Health Network for many years now. We were making great strides in improving the dental care for Maine children, then along came Covid-19. The response to the pandemic demanded a lot from all of the systems that serve children, and much of the progress we had been seeing was lost. Oral health took a big hit when kids were unable to come to routine well-child appointments, and we lost that opportunity to provide dental care and education, and the ability to refer kids when they have serious dental issues.

We have a lot of catching up to do and it's going to take a lot of work, but there is significant momentum behind the effort to bring preventive services to children. From my decades of experience, the cost to do so is insignificant compared to the health benefits Maine children will get from the School Oral Health Program.

As a pediatrician, I know that the children of Maine need and deserve these core health services. Please ensure that the funding for the program is included in the budget. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey A. Stone, DO
Waterville, Maine

Jeffrey Stone, DO
Maine AAP
LD 258
attached