

Testimony of Stephen C Mills, DDS, Pediatric Dentist, and Board of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine, 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 Stephen Mills. I am a semi-retired pediatric dentist who has practiced in Maine for 36 years. In addition, I have had the honor of participating on the Board of Directors of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine. 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. I was and am passionate about the initial LD 1501 and thank you for enacting that legislation. Now I want to make sure that it continues to grow and to ultimately succeed.

The School Oral Health Program is off to a great start but the whole idea behind LD 1501 last session was for it to expand to encompass as many children as possible. With this growth comes increased costs. It was true in my own practice and it is true in this circumstance. This increase in expenditures was specifically foreseen in the initial fiscal note and now should not be ignored. The School Oral Health Program is a great model for getting kids the care they need, and it makes sense that it costs more to service more schools with this care!

On a personal note as a pediatric dentist let me tell you a bit about what is going on in that world. Pediatric Dentists in Maine as well as the entire country are often the ones who, because we see just kids, see all children including those of different socioeconomic backgrounds, those with cultural and ethnicity differences as well as those with physical and intellectual difficulties. We truly want to see everyone. But currently in an informal survey most pediatric dentists are severely limiting taking these populations as routine new patients. Many of these good pediatric dentists continue to do their part and see patients of all types *on referral* but do not take on new patients like these. If this is going on with the dentists who are most likely to see these kids, imagine what the rest of the dental community is doing? This makes it even more

important to reach out to where those kids are by making sure the School Oral Health Program has the funding to expand to all schools.

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.