

Testimony of Courtney Vannah, Program Manager, Oral Health Initiatives, MCD Global Health 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, I am pleased to offer testimony in support of LD258. I am an independent practice dental hygienist who works with MCD Global Health on multiple measures increasing access to dental care for Maine's children and have worked directly with the Maine CDC School Oral Health Program in the past, providing invaluable services to the underserved children 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.

Far too many of Maine's children go without dental services. Numerous children rely on school-based services as their only access point for dental care of any kind. Maine's School Oral Health Program (SOHP) offers some children their only opportunity for oral health assessment and application of fluoride varnish. This evidence-based preventive treatment is proven to reduce dental disease risk when applied routinely. While working with the SOHP, I saw children with active dental infections who said they had never had a dental appointment before. Without screenings provided in schools, many families are unaware that their child has dental needs, and issues can go unnoticed until they are severe and require emergency intervention. Access to this basic health service is an essential need that should be afforded to all children, not just those who are lucky enough to be enrolled in a school currently served by the SOHP. All children, in all schools, in Maine should be offered equal access to this basic need.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney E. Vannah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Courtney E. Vannah, IPDH, MS, MPH  
Program Manager, Oral Health Initiatives  
MCD Global Health