

Dental Center

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March 16, 2023

Re: LD #1026 Resolve, To Direct the University of Maine System to Establish a Dental Therapy Degree Program

To Whom it May Concern:

Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC), fully supports the establishment of a dental therapy degree program within the University of Maine System. PCHC can speak firsthand to the importance of dental therapy in improving access to dental care across the state of Maine. We are currently the only dental facility within the state and on the Eastern Seaboard utilizing dental therapists as a member of the dental care team.

Establishing a dental therapy program will benefit the citizens, employers, and communities in Maine in a variety of ways:

- Increasing access to dental services for all by increasing the number of lower cost dental providers in the State. This will increase access – to oral healthcare, which, over time, will decrease the total cost of all healthcare services as a result of lower ER utilization and better oral health. It will also decrease the total cost of delivering dental services while increasing access, because dental therapists are lower cost providers, much like nurse practitioners and physician assistants on the medical side.
- The need for access for dental care is greater than it has ever been. Many individuals are waiting 7 to 12 months to be seen by a dental provider while others are unable to establish with any dental provider due to their insurance. At PCHC one dental therapist was able to see an additional 1,265 patients from November 2021 to November 2022. Adding dental therapists allows our staff dentists to function at a higher level, opening access to the more complex and difficult procedures such as extractions and root canals. This improves the access to more specialized dental care, where the current wait list is 8 to 12 months.

- Creating professional opportunities for Maine and the surrounding geographic regions and recruiting students to dental professions, easing the access challenge. The presence of a high-quality Dental Therapy training program within the state will expand knowledge, exposure and utilization of the dental therapy model, leading to the creation of jobs. It will also attract people to Maine who are interested in this profession. PCHC has been fortunate to work with The University of Maine System with their dental health programs for their student rotations and we acknowledge what an incredible opportunity this is for the state. Their dental health programs are highly respected for their high-quality of professors and a state-of-the-art facility. The dental health programs are known to fully prepare their students to be distinguished dental professionals. The addition of a Dental Therapy program will draw students interested in a career in dentistry to Maine. Having the opportunity to complete clinical rotations with the Maine dental community will likely lead to graduates deciding to stay in Maine to begin their careers in dental therapy.

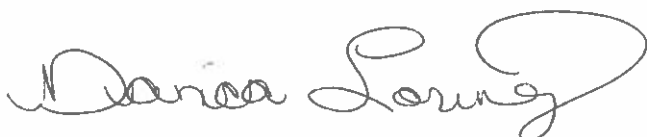
PCHC is confident that the University of Maine Dental Health Program will not only succeed in improving access in Maine to oral healthcare, but it will be a national leader in dental therapy education and attract and retain dental professionals in the State.

PCHC fully supports this initiative, as it will offer additional career opportunities for our state and increase additional access to dental care for our communities. Now more than ever our communities need us and are relying on us to improve Maine dental care. We can't afford to let them down.

Sincerely,



Dr. Matthew Offman, PCHC Executive Clinical Director



Danica Loring, EFDA, PCHC Dental Practice Director