

Tatyana O'Donnell  
Saco  
LD 1026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Tatyana O'Donnell, RDH, IPDH, MSDH from the City of Saco and I am testifying in support of LD 1026. I was a junior at the UNE back in 2014 when the dental hygiene therapist (DHT) was officially recognized by the state and was so thrilled that we would finally have a mid-level dental provider license available to provide access to individuals who are of the underserved communities. Unfortunately, the way my life has gone I have not been able to uproot my life and complete the necessary training to become licensed as a DHT, as this would involve moving out to Minnesota (closest schooling available). I have been waiting so long for a school in New England to take on this project and get the curriculum passed for a DHT. I thought for a while that Vermont would be the one to get it done first, however this did not come to fruition. I have since obtained a master's degree in dental hygiene with a Public Health focus, obtained my independent practice license, started my own independent practice dental hygiene practice, and try to serve those who are otherwise limited in their abilities to get quality preventive dental care, but I have been longing for years to complete the dental hygiene therapy program so I can do so much more! By establishing the Dental Therapy degree program, you open up an opportunity for many current dental hygienists to expand their knowledge base and potentially reduce the overall cost of dental and health care to many patients across the state of Maine. By creating an educational opportunity to obtain the training necessary for DHT licensure more patients can be seen for minor restorative treatment, simple extractions, palliative pain and referrals, and even more preventive educational opportunities that will keep many patients out of the emergency rooms and quick-care clinics that cost the state thousands of dollars a year. With the University of New England declining the opportunity to educate the dental hygienists that are ready to take the next step (not only in ME, but also surrounding states!), we need the support of legislative representatives and the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee to make the mid-level dental provider a reality in our state and lead the way, as we always do, for surrounding states to make a healthier & happier community.