



**Testimony of Becca Matusovich, Executive Director  
Children's Oral Health Network of Maine**

**Biennial Budget CHANGE PACKAGE to LD 258**

An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

Before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Public Hearing: May 17, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services. My name is Becca Matusovich and I am the Executive Director of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine. Our Network is a collaborative effort, funded primarily by philanthropic dollars, which aims to create a Maine where no child suffers from preventable dental disease.

I came here and testified back in February to ask you to add funding into the biennial budget to complete the expansion of the state's School Oral Health Program, a priority that was unanimously supported by both of these committees last session. At the end of my written testimony you will find some key background points I provided last time, in case you are looking for a refresher on the history behind this push to expand the School Oral Health Program.

The Legislature took a huge step forward last session in deciding that the School Oral Health Program is an asset with great value for every community in Maine and therefore it should be available to all schools statewide. We were concerned when the funding for the remaining steps of the expansion was not included in the Governor's proposed budget for FY24-25, but we are thrilled to see it on p. 63 in the change package, and we applaud the administration for taking the step to add it. We remain very committed to supporting and assisting and collaborating with the Department to ensure the expansion is the huge success our children need it to be.

The handout attached to my testimony provides a partial snapshot of the many organizations who are united in this effort to expand the School Oral Health Program. This hearing came up quickly so it is difficult for many partners to get here on such short notice, but I have included with my testimony a list of the people who testified in support of adding this funding back in the February hearing and I would encourage you to go back and revisit their testimony if you need a refresher about all the reasons why the School Oral Health Program is important.

The bottom line is that there is no opposition to this effort; it is truly a win-win-win for everyone. All you have to do now is make sure that this funding stays in the budget when it passes. I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much for your attention and support on this important issue!

**Additional background from my February testimony:**

In the 130<sup>th</sup> legislature, LD 1501, sponsored by Rep. Lori Gramlich, passed unanimously in 2021 and was carried over by the Appropriations Committee, which then in 2022 incorporated both the language and the funding from the fiscal note into the FY 2023 supplemental budget. The language enacted into statute (<https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3174-S.html>) required the Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program to expand to all schools by 2025 (note: LD 1837 which is in the HHS Committee now would clarify that this expansion is to apply to all public schools). The fiscal note had projected a gradual ramp-up of funding in order to reach the full amount of funding needed to serve all schools by FY2025.

We were grateful to both the HHS and AFA committees for your understanding of why the expansion of the School Program and the restoration of the State Oral Health Coordinator position were so important, and we celebrated the inclusion of both in the FY2023 supplemental budget. This initial increase was an essential first step to get the expansion started on a 3-year ramp-up. However, we were very disappointed to see that the subsequent increases for FY 2024 and 2025, as outlined in the original fiscal note, did not appear in the Governor's proposed biennial budget.

The School Oral Health Program will not single-handedly solve the crisis of dental disease and lack of access to care that plagues our state. However, it is an absolutely essential part of the solution; it will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all of the other efforts to improve oral health in Maine.

**People who testified in support of adding SOHP funding into budget in February 2023:**

Teresa Alley	Washington County Children's Program <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011111">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011111</a>
Becca Boulos	Maine Public Health Association <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011457">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011457</a>
Kate Ende	Consumers for Affordable Health Care <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167553">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167553</a>
Lyvia Gaewsky	From the First Tooth <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011084">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011084</a>
Lori Gramlich	Maine House of Representatives <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167551">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167551</a>
Morgan Hynd	Bingham Program <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011099">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011099</a>
Kathy Kilrain del Rio	Maine Equal Justice <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167548">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167548</a>
Lorraine Klug	Maine Dental Hygienists Association <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011044">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011044</a>
Becca Matusovich	Children's Oral Health Network of Maine <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167552">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=167552</a>
Stephen Mills	Pediatric Dentist <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011073">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011073</a>
Jeff Stone	Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011067">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011067</a>
Courtney Vannah	Independent Practice Dental Hygienist, MCD Global Health <a href="https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011109">https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=10011109</a>

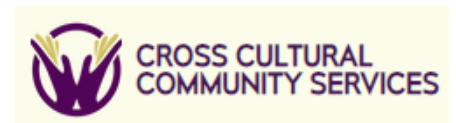
The following partners are unified in their support of ensuring the **Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program** has the necessary funding in the biennial budget to expand to all schools by 2025, as enacted in 22 MRSA §3174-S, sub-§2-A:



Children's  
Oral Health  
Network  
of Maine



Maine Medical Association



**All Maine children deserve oral health care so they can stay healthy, be free from pain, and show up at school ready to learn.**

22 MRSA §3174-S, sub-§2-A: <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3174-S.html>

February 2023

# Imagine the possibilities: improving children's oral health in Maine

Key opportunities in 2023:  
LD 258 Biennial Budget  
LD 1837 An Act to Increase Oral Health Services



## State of Maine

Population age 0-20 in 2021: 299,008

Percentage of  
MaineCare-insured  
children <21  
receiving preventive  
dental care

**42%** of children with MaineCare  
had at least one preventive dental  
claim in 2021

**58%** had 0 preventive dental claims

Maine ranks

**48th**

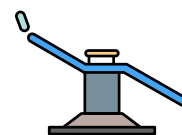
out of 50 states  
on Medicaid's national "PDENT"  
performance indicator  
measuring preventive care access

Number of dental offices statewide taking new  
pediatric patients with MaineCare, with less than  
a 6-month wait for an appointment:

(Fall 2022)

**21\***

\*some with age or  
geographic restrictions



**34%** of children in Maine had either no dental  
benefits or were covered by MaineCare or  
commercial dental insurance for only part of the  
year in 2021.



The Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program provides screenings,  
fluoride varnish, and sealants for children regardless of insurance\*

**343 out of 564**

Public schools in Maine not  
currently served by the state's  
School Oral Health Program  
(2022-23)



**61%** Not currently served by the  
School Oral Health Program

\*For children to be eligible for SOHP services, parents must return consent forms.



Children's  
Oral Health  
Network  
of Maine

Working together to ensure that all Maine children  
can grow up free from preventable dental disease.  
For more info: [www.maineconh.org](http://www.maineconh.org)

Data sources: Maine Kids Count, Maine CDC School Oral Health Program,  
Maine Department of Education school database, From the First Tooth,  
Maine Health Data Organization All Payer Claims Database, CMS Medicaid  
Child Core Dataset