

Testimony of Teresa Alley, Oral Health Coordinator, Washington County Children’s Program 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: May 17, 2023

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 Teresa Alley and I am a dental hygienist employed in Washington County for almost 36 years.

I am writing to extend my sincere appreciation to the administration for recognizing the importance of the school oral health program and including funding for it in the change package. Additionally, I would like to thank the Health and Human Services committee for their unwavering support of oral health issues and their dedication to prioritizing this funding during this session.

I continue to observe the positive impacts the school-based oral health program has for our County. With preventive measures alone, the decay rate for children reduced from 35% to as low as 23%. The strength of our program is that we serve children within the school. Therefore, parents do not need to take time off from work to bring them to a dental office. The transportation barrier is also eliminated as we travel to each school. Our policy is not to charge any family any out of pocket costs. Hence, we rely deeply on this funding source as our core programming costs. We have multiple funding streams in an addition to our Maine CDC contract which accounts for a third of our budget. This core funding allows us to leverage twice the amount of funding we receive from the State and supplement our budget costs with the generosity of private foundation awards. Historically, the reimbursement we receive from MaineCare is approximately \$10,000 annually.

I know from my work with the School Oral Health Program in Washington County that ensuring all students statewide can access this program will result in incredible health impacts for children in Maine.