



**Testimony of Kalie Hess, Associate Director
Children's Oral Health Network of Maine**

LD 210: 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, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Before the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services
Public Hearing: February 24, 2025

Good afternoon, Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services.

My name is Kalie Hess and I am the Associate Director of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine, a network of hundreds of organizations statewide dedicated to ensuring that all children can grow up free from preventable dental disease.

Our Network appreciates the inclusion of two critical oral health positions in this supplemental budget—the Public Health Educator and the Oral Health Data Analyst at the Maine CDC. These roles are essential to rebuilding access to preventive oral health care. For over half a decade, we have worked alongside our partners to restore core capacity at the Maine CDC after its oral health program, once employing upwards of eight people in the early 1990s, was reduced to zero by 2015. The flyer following my testimony shares a small sample of the many organizations that have actively worked to rebuild the state's ability to address oral health over the years.

The Health and Human Services Committee frequently hears from these organizations about Maine's severe oral health crisis. I regularly speak with families struggling to access dental care, a challenge I've faced with my own children. Our partners who testified last session on the bill seeking to restore these two positions shared similar stories, underscoring the urgent need for state leadership to fix our broken system.

On behalf of the many partners who have been working on the need to restore the Maine CDC's oral health program for several sessions now, I want to reiterate our appreciation to the administration for recognizing the importance of investing in the state capacity that is essential to address this crisis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

The following partners are unified in their support of rebuilding **Maine CDC's oral health program capacity**. Public health leadership is essential to address the oral health needs of Maine's population. Please fund **LD 1837: An Act to Increase Oral Health Services**^{*} in the supplemental budget.

**From a prior legislative session*



Children's
Oral Health
Network
of Maine



CROSS CULTURAL
COMMUNITY SERVICES



Maine
Dental Hygienists' Association



MAINE
DENTAL
ASSOCIATION



WATERVILLE
COMMUNITY
DENTAL & CENTER



Consumers for
Affordable
Health Care



MAINE
PARENT
FEDERATION

All Maine people deserve oral health care so they can stay healthy, be free from pain, and succeed in school, work, and life.