

Stephanie Swett
Ellsworth
LD 1615

Subject: Please Vote ONTP on LD 1615 and Maine dental patients

Dear Members of the Joint Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

I'm writing as a concerned health professional and urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass (ONTP) on LD 1615: To an act to expand access to oral health care by creating a new path for obtaining a license practice Dentistry.

I am a registered dental hygienist for 25+ years with Independent dental hygiene practicing authorities in Downeast Maine. We help a lot of people and have increased the access to dental care for so many. Having the education and correct licensing to do this is so important.

As a licensed dental hygienist, I fully support increasing the access to care. Having said that, this bill is flawed in that it creates a two-tiered system in care in Maine. One in which a provider must go to accredited schools and pass board exams that prove competence, the other in which we are taking persons who have been trained outside the US, where accreditation may not exist, and the same standards may not be adhered to. The second tier appears to be for those of a lower socioeconomic status. Someone who has no insurance or is underinsured deserves to be seen by someone who has proved that they are trained, competent, and safe to treat patients just as anyone else.

Additionally, we already have a pathway for a dentist trained outside the US to become fully licensed that includes competency and safety. This would also allow for these individuals to practice dental hygiene without proper education and testing required to protect patients.

I urge you to please vote ONTP on 1615 and protect Maine's dental patients.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Swett, IPDH, RDH, BS