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Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1615, An Act to Expand Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services April 30, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and Esteemed Member of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. We are in support of LD 1615, which seeks to create an avenue for qualified foreign-trained dentists to practice dentistry under the general supervision of a licensed dentist.

Maine's children and adolescents are experiencing an oral health crisis. Many of our members, including primary care pediatricians and specialists, report seeing children with tooth decay on a daily basis. On the national scale, more than 40% of children (ages 2-19 years) have dental cavities (1). If left untreated, this tooth decay can become very painful and distracting, which can lead to academic interruptions and can impact the overall health of the child. Access to dental care is crucial to preventing and treating tooth decay and ensuring good oral health.

This crisis is due, at least in part, to the severe shortage of dental care providers in Maine, especially in more rural areas. Thousands of Maine children go without routine dental care because there is no available dental provider in their communities, or in surrounding areas. In fact, in 2022, only 35% of Maine children with dental insurance coverage had an active dental home (2), highlighting the dire need for increased dental care access in our state.

LD 1615 would help to address Maine's dental care shortage by allowing qualified dentists who may have been trained internationally, who are currently allowed to practice in other states, to practice in Maine under the general supervision of a licensed dentist. This bill includes guardrails to ensure patient safety and quality of care, while allowing Maine to attract and retain skilled professionals who can provide care to our most rural and underserved communities.

LD 1615 offers a meaningful and common-sense solution to Maine's dental care crisis. We must do everything we can to ensure that Maine children and adolescents have access to dental care they need, including routine care, early detection, and treatment. If we fail to do so, our children's oral and overall health will suffer.

Please ensure that Maine children and adolescents don't lose out on qualified dental providers simply because there is no pathway for them to practice. We urge the committee to prioritize the health of Maine children and adolescents and vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1615.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

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