

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the Committee,

As a board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon practicing in South Portland and the current President-Elect of the Maine Dental Association, I am writing to express my strong opposition to LD1615, "An Act to Improve Dental Health Access for Maine Residents."

While I support the bill's intention to expand access to dental care—an important and shared goal—I am deeply concerned about its unintended consequences on patient safety, quality of care, and the long-term integrity of the dental profession in Maine.

LD1615 proposes a significant expansion of the scope of practice for dental auxiliaries in a manner that risks undermining established standards of care. Oral and maxillofacial surgery involves complex diagnosis and treatment that demands extensive training, clinical judgment, and surgical experience. Allowing providers to perform irreversible procedures without the comprehensive education and oversight required of our current licensed dentists jeopardizes patient health and safety.

As a practicing surgeon, I have seen firsthand the complications that arise when procedures are performed without adequate training—ranging from infections and nerve damage to delayed diagnosis of serious pathology. Maine's dental workforce must be expanded thoughtfully, ensuring that any new providers are held to the same rigorous standards that safeguard the public today.

Additionally, LD1615 introduces ambiguity into the regulatory framework, weakening the authority of the Maine Board of Dental Practice and creating potential for legal and clinical confusion. As stewards of the dental profession and advocates for our patients, we must oppose any policy that prioritizes expediency over evidence-based care.

I urge you to reconsider this legislation and work collaboratively with the Maine Dental Association, which remains committed to improving access while upholding the highest standards of care. Together, we can develop sustainable solutions that address workforce shortages without compromising patient safety.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Lawler", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Lawler DMD MD