

**Testimony of Jake Lachance**

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**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services**

**In Support to LD 1615 “An Act to Expand Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry”**

Sen. Bailey, Rep. Mathieson, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, my name is Jake Lachance, and I am a Government Relations Specialist for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, which advocates for thousands of large and small businesses across the State of Maine. I am pleased to submit 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**.

LD 1615 addresses one of the critical workforce shortages facing our state: the availability of qualified dental providers, particularly in rural and low-income areas. This bill creates a new, structured pathway — the **Adjunct Dentist License** — to allow highly trained, foreign-educated dentists to practice in Maine under the supervision of licensed dentists in approved settings. It is a pragmatic, low-cost solution that will meaningfully improve access to oral health care while maintaining patient safety and quality standards.

**Expanding Access to Care and Reducing Wait Times**

Maine communities — particularly in rural regions — face significant shortages of dental providers. As a result, Mainers often wait weeks or months for dental appointments, leading to preventable health complications and even unnecessary emergency room visits. By authorizing qualified adjunct dentists to practice under general supervision in community health clinics and other board-approved settings, LD 1615 will directly expand access to preventive care, cleanings, screenings, and urgent services for families across the state.

**Strengthening Maine’s Workforce and Supporting Economic Growth**

LD 1615 also represents an important workforce development strategy. It taps into a pool of professionals who already hold dental degrees and have passed the required board examinations but who are currently blocked from practicing in Maine due to credentialing barriers. By bringing these individuals into the workforce through a supervised, structured model, Maine can:

- Strengthen the dental workforce pipeline.
- Help stabilize dental practices and clinics facing staffing shortages.
- Support local economic growth by expanding dental services, which in turn creates jobs for hygienists, administrative staff, and support personnel.

- Improve employee access to oral healthcare, reducing absenteeism and supporting productivity across industries.

#### **Promoting Health Equity and Public Health Goals**

Oral health is a key component of overall health, influencing chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Delays in accessing dental care disproportionately affect low-income populations and children. LD 1615 aligns with Maine's broader public health goals by improving access to care, promoting earlier intervention, and supporting lifelong oral health starting in childhood.

#### **Maintaining Strong Safeguards and a Pathway to Full Licensure**

Importantly, LD 1615 is structured to protect patient safety and maintain high standards of care:

- Adjunct dentists must work under a written practice agreement, with clear protocols and supervision requirements.
- Services provided are limited to those explicitly authorized.
- Supervising dentists remain responsible for all services rendered.
- Adjunct dentists who complete three consecutive years of supervised practice in good standing may pursue full licensure, providing a sustainable long-term workforce strategy.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce strongly supports LD 1615 because it is a **smart, structured, and scalable solution** to a pressing workforce challenge. It meets the needs of employers, providers, and patients while enhancing Maine's ability to compete for talent and improve healthcare outcomes.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote **Ought to Pass** on LD 1615. Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.