



Testimony of Deb Neuman, President and CEO
Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce
April 30, 2025

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”

Sen. Bailey, Rep. Mathieson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Deb Neuman, I live in Hampden and serve as President and CEO of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of our Board of Directors, 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.**

Access to quality healthcare is a priority need in our state, especially in rural areas. Good oral health is a critical component to ensuring overall health for individuals. Yet, accessing these services can be challenging. I speak from direct experience. I am fortunate to have had quality dental care my entire life but lately I have run into challenges. This week in fact, I tried to see a dentist for an issue with a tooth and was told the next available appointment would be in July. They simply do not have enough dentists in their long-standing practice to handle the demand. If this problem goes on for too long it could lead to complications and other health issues, eventually costing the healthcare system and jeopardizing my health.

I am one of many stories. Many Mainers wait weeks or months for dental appointments, leading to preventable health complications and unnecessary emergency room visits. LD 1615 will directly expand access to preventive care, cleanings, screenings and urgent services by authorizing qualified adjunct dentists to practice under general supervision in community health clinics and other board-approved settings.

The problem is worse in rural areas and for families who don't have the financial means, resources or insurance to make dental care a priority when other needs take priority, food, reliable transportation, electric bills, heat, etc. LD 1615 will improve access to care, promote earlier intervention, and support lifelong oral health starting in childhood.

This bill will also serve to ensure we can attract new residents and families to Maine. Access to quality healthcare is something we are asked about frequently by people who contact our Chamber interested in moving to the Bangor region. Increasing (and retaining) our population is critical to Maine's future economic success. **The Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1615.** Thank you for your consideration and efforts to ensure the future health of Mainers and our state.

