



## **Strong Support for LD 1746: An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventive Dental Care Among Maine Children**

**Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,**

**My name is Melinda Nadeau, and I am a dedicated school nurse in Brunswick. I am here on Behalf of Maine Association of School Nurses and myself in my strongest support for LD 1746: An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventive Dental Care Among Maine Children.**

**As a school nurse who has spent over a decade engaged with Maine's School Oral Health Program, I have seen firsthand the importance of bringing oral health services directly into the school setting. My support for LD 1746 is shaped by countless experiences with students whose lives were improved through timely dental interventions. That said, while school-based screenings and fluoride varnish programs are valuable, they are often not enough to address the comprehensive dental needs of many of our students.**

**Oral health greatly impacts the well-being of the students across schools in Maine. Beyond the obvious pain and discomfort, dental disease contributes to missed school days, difficulty concentrating in class, and even impacts their overall health and self-esteem. In one instance, an oral screening through our program even helped identify a child in renal failure. Unfortunately, once children are screened it can be challenging to connect them to further care if they are in need of it.**

**LD 1746 offers a crucial and innovative approach to tackling this crisis, building on models that we know work. Integrating silver diamine fluoride into the primary care setting makes perfect sense for early intervention and prevention, especially as dental providers are scarce. And, scaling up the school-based oral health care delivery model refined in Cumberland County would be a game-changer for our children's oral health. This model not only removes barriers like transportation and cost but also creates a familiar and trusted environment for care. The extra layer of supportive care coordination for children who require care from a dentist is an important component in an oral health delivery system that is inaccessible to the children I see who need it most.**

**The ability to sustain, coordinate, and replicate this work statewide, with support from a well-resourced Oral Health Program at the CDC, represents a long overdue investment in children's overall health, equity, and academic success.**

**As someone who has been advocating for children's oral health for more than a decade, I urge you to support LD 1746 and invest in the oral health of Maine's children. This bill represents a significant step forward in ensuring that all children have the opportunity for a healthy smile and a brighter future.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical legislation.**

**Sincerely,**

**Melinda Nadeau School Nurse**

**Harriet Beecher Stowe School**

**Nominating Committee and Past President for MASN**

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