

Testimony in Support of LD 1891 – “An Act to Address the Dental Professional Workforce Shortage”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Natalie Saltz, and I am a licensed dental hygienist practicing in Biddeford, Maine. I am writing today in strong support of LD 1891, “An Act to Address the Dental Professional Workforce Shortage.”

Across the state, and particularly in designated shortage areas, dental hygienists like myself are struggling to meet the preventive and therapeutic needs of our communities due to a critical shortage of dental professionals. Appointments are often booked months in advance and patients go without cleanings, exams, and essential periodontal care. Many only seek care once their pain becomes unbearable. As a provider committed to prevention and early intervention, this is heartbreaking to witness.

This shortage is not a future concern, it’s a present crisis. Our dental teams are stretched thin, and burnout is real. I have personally experienced the strain of trying to serve more patients with fewer providers, and I have seen colleagues leave the profession or the state altogether due to the pressures of this imbalance.

LD 1891 is a meaningful and strategic step toward addressing this crisis. By offering scholarships, loan repayment programs, and updated tax credits, this bill acknowledges the financial barriers that keep aspiring dental professionals from entering or remaining in the field, especially in rural and underserved areas.

The “Dentists for Maine’s Future” program, with its emphasis on students with deep ties to Maine, is especially promising. These are the professionals most likely to return to our communities and build long-term practices. Investment in them is an investment in the oral health, and overall health, of our state.

As a dental hygienist, I know firsthand how critical access to comprehensive dental care is for every Mainer, regardless of where they live. I urge you to support LD 1891 and help rebuild a dental workforce that can meet the needs of our population with compassion, skill, and sustainability.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Sincerely,

Natalie Saltz, RDH

Portland, Maine

