

## **Testimony in Support of LD 1891**

Submitted by Adam Saltz, DMD, MS, MPH

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Adam Saltz. I am a board-certified periodontist practicing in South Portland, Maine. I currently serve as President of the Maine Dental Association and Vice Chair-Elect to the American Dental Association's New Dentist Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 1891.

Access to oral health care remains a serious challenge in rural and underserved areas of Maine. We are unable to recruit new dentists or hygienists, our infrastructure is strained by months-long waiting lists, and many patients, especially those on MaineCare, are going without care entirely. This is not just a workforce issue— it's a public health issue.

LD 1891 proposes a thoughtful and targeted strategy to help reverse this trend. The bill's creation of offering scholarships, tax credits and student loan repayment for dental providers willing to serve in designated shortage areas is exactly the kind of solution we need. Other states have successfully implemented similar programs. Colorado, for example, retained 90% of participating dentists in rural areas after their service commitments ended. Incentives like those in LD 1891 don't just attract talent— they help retain it.

Dental school graduates often leave with more than \$300,000 in student loan debt. When they weigh their options, the financial incentives offered by urban practices or out-of-state opportunities are more appealing. LD 1891 would help level that playing field by supporting dentists and hygienists who are willing to make a meaningful commitment to our communities.

The need is real. In Piscataquis County, for example, there isn't a single, full-time practicing dentist. One of our members currently travels over 90 miles each week to offer part-time care in a local clinic, and even then, she's forced to turn away patients with urgent needs due to limited capacity. This program could empower like clinics to hire more part- and full-time providers, directly impacting the lives of hundreds of Mainers.

This bill is a smart, forward-thinking investment in Maine's future. It supports our dental workforce, improves access to care, and strengthens community health. On behalf of the Maine Dental Association and the patients we serve, I urge you to support LD 1891.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Saltz", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Adam Saltz, DMD, MS, MPH  
President, Maine Dental Association