



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

My name is Traci Dempsey, I live in Bath, Maine. I president of the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association that represents the nearly 1300 licensed dental hygienists in Maine. We urge you to vote **OTP** on LD 1746.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood yet it is entirely preventable. Children with untreated dental problems are more likely to miss school, struggle to eat and sleep, and suffer long-term health consequences. This legislation recognizes that prevention and early intervention are key and it brings care directly to where children and families already are.

Specifically, this bill funds school-based dental care programs bringing preventive services like screenings, sealants, fluoride treatments, and cleanings to children in school. Although there is a cost to fund these programs they have been proven to improve oral health outcomes, reduce absenteeism, and lower long-term costs especially of emergency room visits for urgent dental needs.

This legislation also supports mobile dental services that reach rural, low-income, and otherwise hard-to-reach communities. Mobile units help bridge the gap in access for families who face barriers like transportation, time off work, or lack of local providers.

Another part of this bill Invests in training primary care providers to incorporate basic oral health into their routine care. Pediatricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners are often the first—and sometimes only—health professionals that young children see. Equipping them with the tools and knowledge to assess oral health and apply preventive measures like silver diamine fluoride greatly decreases progression decay buying time for children to be seen by a dentist and could keep them out of pain and infection.

This is a practical, equitable, and forward-thinking approach to oral health. By integrating dental care into schools, mobile services, and primary care settings, we can catch problems early, reduce disparities, and make oral health part of whole-person care.

I urge you to support this legislation. It is an investment in healthier children, stronger communities, and a more accessible oral care.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to advancing oral health. I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,

Traci L. Dempsey, RDH, IPDH  
President, Maine Dental Hygienists' Association  
Resident of Bath, ME