



May 6th, 2025

LD 1746: An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventive Dental Care Among Maine Children

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

My name is Lyvia Gaewsky, and I am the Program Manager of the From the First Tooth program—a statewide children’s oral health initiative. Our program works to integrate oral health into primary care by providing technical assistance and training on how to perform an oral health risk assessment, evaluation, deliver parent and caregiver education, apply fluoride varnish, and more recently, how to apply silver diamine fluoride. I am writing to express our strong support for LD 1746, which takes critical steps to reduce dental disease and ensure that all Maine children—regardless of where they live or their insurance status—have access to preventive dental care.

LD 1746 offers evidence-based solutions that expand oral health access through primary care and the School Oral Health Program. Primary care is often a child’s first and most consistent connection to the healthcare system, especially in the early years when dental visits are rare. Research and experience from programs like From the First Tooth show this approach works: families trust their primary care teams, providers are eager to expand their role in oral health, and young children can be reached early—before problems escalate. This strategy also helps ease the burden on Maine’s already stretched dental workforce.

LD1746 would equip primary care providers with education and training on how to apply medically approved cavity-arresting treatments like silver diamine fluoride (SDF), which can stop cavity progression in its tracks before it turns into a painful and costly infection.

In spring of 2024 From the First Tooth partnered with two MaineHealth primary care practices to pilot SDF integration into primary care. Through the pilot, From the First Tooth successfully set up procedures, workflows, and provided training within the practices. These practices are actively applying SDF to patients and have treated approximately 175 teeth with dental decay over the last year. Additionally, physicians report that parents and caregivers are overwhelmingly relieved to have dental cavity treatment available to them as they often struggle to find care for their children. Physicians are also grateful to have this resource. Per one of the providers in our pilot:



“SDF has been a wonderful resource in primary care. We are so happy to be able to offer this low-cost, effective, easy treatment to arrest caries, especially when patients do not have easy (or any) access to pediatric dentistry. Patients are very receptive and accepting of it, as it’s quick, painless, and useful.” – Dr. Melissa Keepert, Pediatrician

Investing in LD1746 and providing resources to expand SDF integration into additional primary care practices increases dental treatment for children, reduces future costs of delayed dental treatment, and relieves a stretched dental system.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to children’s health.

Sincerely,

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