



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

Testimony by the Bingham Program in Support of LD 1746: An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventive Dental Care Among Maine Children

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
May 6, 2025**

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Morgan Hynd, and I am the Director of the Bingham Program, a charitable endowment held at Tufts' Medical Center, established in 1932 to promote health and advance medicine in Maine. I am here to speak in support of LD 1746.

In addition to my role at the Bingham Program, I am also a Board member of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine, and a long-standing member of the Maine Oral Health Funders, a philanthropic group dedicated to improving oral health. For more than two decades, philanthropy has done its best to fill in the gaps where state capacity has been limited, supporting community-based programs, workforce development, and prevention initiatives to ensure that children and families have access to the care they need. While these investments have made a meaningful impact, they can't possibly replace essential public health infrastructure that the state can provide.

Maine CDC data from the School Oral Health Program show that during the 2023-24 school year, 33% of the children seen through the program had some form of untreated dental decay. That's one out of every three children they saw during that year. The investments outlined in LD 1746 will ensure significant progress is made to reduce that number, resulting in healthier kids who are ready to learn in school and have better long-term health outcomes overall.

I was encouraged to see Governor Mills include two Maine CDC oral health positions in the biennial budget—this is a critical first step toward rebuilding the infrastructure Maine needs to sustain progress in oral health. With LD 1746, this Committee has an opportunity to go a few steps further by supporting enhanced school-based preventive oral health services, more capacity for the system through support of mobile dental services, and critical training and education that will allow primary care providers to catch and treat dental disease in young children as early as possible. Philanthropy has helped to jumpstart real progress by investing in these areas, but lasting change needs more than just early momentum. State support would be a turbo boost—amplifying what's already working, expanding our reach, and ensuring these gains aren't just initiated, but sustained.

The philanthropic community deeply values its partnership with the state and we hope to continue to grow this public/private partnership through strategic efforts like those outlined in LD 1746. I urge this Committee to build on its legacy of bipartisan support for better oral health for Maine children. Your vote in support of LD 1746 is essential to keeping Maine children healthy and ready to thrive. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Morgan Hynd
Warren
LD 1746

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