

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1746

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Faye Anderson
RSU 22

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Joseph Long
MSAD 35/RSU 35

VICE PRESIDENT

Roy Gott
RSU 24

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**

Jane Osborne
Deer Isle-Stonington CSD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven W. Bailey

—————
**MAINE COUNCIL OF
SCHOOL BOARD
ATTORNEYS**

Isabel Ekman, Esq., Chair

**AN ACT TO REDUCE DENTAL DISEASE AND ENSURE ACCESS TO
ESSENTIAL PREVENTIVE DENTAL CARE AMONG MAINE CHILDREN**

May 6, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Steven Bailey, the Executive Director of the Maine School Boards Association, testifying on behalf of the MSBA legislative committee in support of L.D. 1746, An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventive Dental Care Among Maine Children.

We believe that this initiative advances a critical goal of equitable access to dental care for all Maine children – providing basic services in a way that will help students and families in our most disadvantaged communities.

For decades, school districts have worked with the Maine CDC to expand access to oral health care for Maine children, particularly those in underserved areas. Dozens of Maine school districts participate in this project. And we routinely hear from educators about just how valuable this programming is. Students most in need are receiving basic services – in turn, making them more prepared for learning.

Research has routinely shown that addressing dental problems improves academic achievement. A 2012 study from the [National Institutes of Health study](#) found that absenteeism rates were nearly double for students without accessible dental care, and “parents averaged 2.5 absentee days from work or school per year because of their children’s dental problems.”

These types of services are especially crucial in our rural communities, where dental resources are limited even for families that have the means. Waiting lists are long. Several providers have closed down in the past few years, leaving thousands of patients without services.

This bill makes two important changes to further expand access for these school-based services: it requires DHHS to establish public-private partnerships to all mobile dental services and requires at least one public dental provider in each public health district each year. We believe this bill will add needed capacity across our state, while further tapping into community-based resources. Solving the broader shortage of dental providers will likely require larger legislative fixes, L.D. 1746 will allow more Maine children to obtain care – no matter where they live – helping to alleviate this challenge for many Maine families.