



Maine
DENTAL HYGIENISTS'
ASSOCIATION

Good afternoon, Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and distinguished members of the Taxation Committee.

My name is Traci Dempsey, I reside in Bath, I am a dental hygienist of over 25 years and I am the president of the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association representing nearly 1300 dental hygienists in Maine. I am testifying in strong support of LD 1652.

It is no secret that we have an access to dental care problem here in Maine. Maine faces a serious shortage of dental providers willing or able to accept MaineCare due to chronically low reimbursement rates and the disproportionate administrative burdens that come with Medicaid participation. For many providers, the economic disincentives are simply too great to ignore. This bill directly addresses these barriers.

The **\$5,000 tax credit** is a targeted way to recognize and offset the financial burden that often discourages providers from participating in the MaineCare program. Licensing and malpractice insurance are essential, yet significant, overhead costs. By easing this burden, we are encouraging more dental professionals—particularly those early in their careers or working in underserved areas—to participate in the Medicaid system.

Reimbursing **at 75% of national commercial insurance rates** is a long-overdue correction to an outdated payment structure. Maine has lagged behind many states in ensuring that Medicaid providers are paid fairly, which has led to an access crisis for low-income Mainers. Without adequate reimbursement, providers cannot cover their overhead, invest in new technologies, or dedicate time to complex care needs.

Additionally, expanding reimbursement to include **all dental case management codes** recognizes the full scope of services dentists and their teams provide. Effective case management improves outcomes, reduces missed appointments, and ensures continuity of care—especially for vulnerable patients with chronic or complex needs.

Finally, this bill wisely calls for the establishment of **three new positions within the Office of MaineCare Services** dedicated to dental programs. This investment is more than bureaucratic expansion, it is the infrastructure necessary to ensure that these policy improvements are implemented effectively, monitored appropriately, and adapted over time based on data and outcomes.

Oral health is inseparable from overall health. Untreated dental disease leads to increased emergency department visits, worsened chronic conditions, missed school and work days, and, in some cases, life-threatening infections. By making it easier for dentists to serve MaineCare patients, this bill advances both **health equity** and **fiscal responsibility**.



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In closing LD 1652. is a comprehensive, pragmatic, and deeply needed step forward. It supports providers so that they can support patients. It adjusts reimbursement to reflect real costs. And it strengthens the state's capacity to manage and grow its dental programs.

I urge you to support this bill and help ensure that every Mainer, regardless of income, has access to the dental care they need and deserve.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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