



BANGOR BRACES EST. 1948

BRAD WOODFORD, M.S., D.D.S., M.S.

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Re: LD1652

I wanted to express my support for proposed bill LD 1652.

My name is Dr. Brad Woodford, and I am an Orthodontist which means I specialize in Dentofacial Orthopedics and Straightening of teeth and its supporting structures. I believe that I am one of the only orthodontists in the state of Maine providing Mainecare services for orthodontic treatment who is in private practice and not working at a federally qualified health care center. I also see non-Mainecare patients as well. I have been practicing Orthodontics for 22 years, moving to Maine from Arizona in 2013. I also have a master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling, previously the Director of a Children and Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital program back in Arizona prior to dental school, hence my passion for working with kids and adolescents.

I would like to express my thanks and overall support for the fact that Mainecare does make provision under qualifying conditions for orthodontic treatment for adolescents up to 21 YOA. Arizona for example provided little to no Medicaid/medicare for orthodontic treatment for kids of any age, however, the plethora of providers and a different socioeconomic base meant that many of those kids were able to get necessary services much easier. Maine has a profound lack of providers in Dentistry and Medicine so the need in my opinion is much greater due to this lack of providers. Getting the existing, albeit few providers, to participate in Mainecare services can be enhanced by incentivizing them in any way possible. This proposed bill LD 1652 is a step in that direction.

A big challenge in providing dental/orthodontic services for Mainecare patients is the volume of patients that need to be seen, and managed increases significantly due the lower percentage of reimbursement. It's very hard to increase volume without increasing staff, but to increase staff means increasing overhead. Tax incentives, which is one part of this proposed bill helps to offset some of those costs. Malpractice insurance can range from \$5000-\$8000 a year and must be in place whether I see 100 patients a year or 1000.

One area of research we have in orthodontics is the proven increase in self-esteem and confidence one has when they have a straight smile. It is often the starting foundation for

making friends, socially engaging in life, getting a job, etc... These are basic needs that should be available to all kids growing up but require professionals such as myself and others to provide the necessary services to accomplish this. When children are born with Cleft lip and palate, missing teeth that never grow into their mouths, extra teeth that interfere with normal eruption of teeth, teeth that don't fit together causing lower teeth to tear into the palate causing pain and discomfort, and I could on and on, these children have a difficult time when it comes to developing normal speech, eating and chewing normally, looking out of place and getting teased often by their peers, and kids can be quite cruel. These are all factors that can lead to diminished physical health, poor socialization, lack of self-esteem due to esthetic concerns.

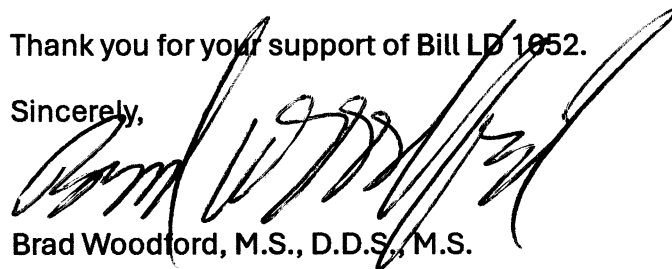
Empowering providers and encouraging more providers to get on board and increase services across the entire State of Maine is necessary. I feel that every orthodontic specialist should provide some percentage of services to Mainecare recipients. This would be a tremendous improvement from the status of things. Bill LD1652 is a much-needed step in helping this potential to become more of a reality.

A study published in 2017 in *Frontiers in Public Health* compared Orthodontic Medicaid Funding in the US 2006 to 2015. During that time every region in the country reduced their orthodontic payment for services by an average of 39% except the New England state which were increased by 5%. Again, this is just for orthodontic treatment and does not include general dental services.

While I donate almost \$5000 in unrealized payments from each patient who qualifies for Full Orthodontic treatment, this population of people who receive Mainecare benefits, is one of the most rewarding things I have done in my entire career. Being able to change someone's life who never thought they would smile again is truly priceless. Personally, I am thankful and grateful to be practicing in a State that does provide reimbursement for its citizens. I hope this increases and continues so that Maine will lead New England and improve the potential for attracting and maintaining excellent professionals to provide the services needed.

Thank you for your support of Bill LD 1652.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Woodford', written over the printed name.

Brad Woodford, M.S., D.D.S., M.S.