



Children's Oral Health Network of Maine

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Testimony of Kalie Hess

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LD 1772 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Public Hearing: January 7, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kalie Hess and I am the Associate Director of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine (COHN). Our network is made up of hundreds of organizations statewide dedicated to working collaboratively to ensure that all children grow up free from preventable dental disease. I am here on behalf of our Network to testify in support of LD 1772 as amended.

Our testimony on LD 1658 lays out a number of concerns about the current challenges facing the Fund for Health Maine, which I won't repeat here. The amended LD 1772 addresses these concerns by establishing a Fund for a Healthy Maine Stabilization Fund to ensure more predictable, sustained support for prevention and public health investments. It also establishes the Maine Commission on Public Health and Prevention, a new advisory body to assist the Legislature and the Maine CDC in developing and promoting a comprehensive state health plan and advising on resource allocation and long-term public health strategy. This Commission will help bring strategic, evidence-based planning to how Maine prioritizes and invests in disease prevention and health promotion. This is greatly needed if we are to tackle chronic conditions like dental disease at the scale the problem demands.

Public health solutions take time, and prevention efforts require stability and sustained, strategic investment to achieve meaningful results. By creating a mechanism to stabilize funding and support structured public health planning, the amended LD 1772 offers a thoughtful path forward – one that will help ensure that tobacco settlement and other prevention funds are used intentionally, transparently, and effectively to improve the health of Maine communities for years to come.

For these reasons, COHN strongly supports LD 1772, as amended, and urges the Committee to vote ought to pass.