



January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Dear Chair Bailey and all distinguished members of Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on LD 2030, which concerns adding local anesthesia and nitrous oxide analgesia administration within the scope of practice for dental hygienists. My name is Alicia Plemmons, PhD, and I am an assistant professor and director of the Knee Regulatory Research Center at West Virginia University. This comment is not submitted on behalf of any party or interest group.

Of Maine's sixteen counties, every single one has at least one facility or area that is considered a dental healthcare provider shortage area.<sup>1</sup> These deserts include urban areas, rural areas, low-income populations, tribal land, and in the case of Piscataquis and Somerset- entire counties. Dental hygienists have long been established as safe and effective providers regardless of level of autonomy and supervision. In states that allow for more autonomy of the hygienists within dental care, there is higher use of preventative dental care and identified trends of hygienists working within these dire shortage areas.<sup>2</sup>

There is a dire shortage for routine and simple dental care, which is leading to long-term health complications for millions of Americans. Enabling dental hygienists to work to the top of their training and licensure shifts out the supply curve and gives Mainers a larger provider pool to protect dental health.

Best regards,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas/hpsa-find>

<sup>2</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1002/heh.4832>

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