



Written Testimony of Kate Lydon, RN, BSN
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Yarmouth, Maine

In Support of LD 2123
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Kate Lydon, and I am a registered nurse and the Clinical Director of the Maine Dental Surgery Center, a Joint Commission–accredited ambulatory surgery center dedicated exclusively to dental care. In my role, I oversee clinical operations, patient safety, regulatory compliance, and—most importantly—the direct care experience of children and families who come through our doors every day.

I am writing in strong support of LD 2123.

Unlike administrative or policy roles removed from the bedside, my work places me directly with children and parents before, during, and after surgery. I speak with families before they arrive anxious and exhausted from months—or years—of waiting for care. I support parents as they explain the pain their child has lived with, the missed school days, the behavioral challenges, and the toll that untreated dental disease has taken on their child’s quality of life. I also have the privilege of watching those same families leave our center relieved, grateful, and often emotional after their child finally receives the care they need.

The majority of the patients we serve are insured through MaineCare. Many are very young. Many have special health care needs, developmental differences, trauma histories, or complex medical conditions that make treatment in a traditional dental office impossible. These families are not asking for convenience, they are asking for access, dignity, and relief from suffering.

At the Maine Dental Surgery Center, we have built a highly specialized, trauma-informed, and family-centered surgical environment. Our nurses, anesthesia providers, and dental teams are specifically trained to care for this vulnerable population. We slow things down when needed, explain every step, and meet families where they are. For many of our patients, this is the first time they have felt seen, heard, and supported within the health care system.

The impact is real and immediate. We see children who were struggling with sleep, eating, and attending school return to normal daily life. We see parents express relief not just that the surgery is over, but that their child was treated with compassion and respect, in an experience tailored to their individual needs.

We are making a meaningful difference—but we are limited in how many patients we can serve.

The primary barrier is anesthesia reimbursement under MaineCare. As a nurse leader responsible for staffing, safety standards, equipment, medications, and regulatory compliance, I can state clearly that anesthesia services are resource-intensive and essential to safe surgical care. Current reimbursement rates do not cover the true cost of providing anesthesia in an ambulatory surgery center setting. Each additional MaineCare anesthesia case places further financial strain on our center.

This is not a matter of efficiency or willingness. It is a matter of sustainability.

Because anesthesia reimbursement does not meet the cost of care, our ability to expand operating room availability, bring in additional providers, and treat more MaineCare patients is constrained. From a clinical and ethical standpoint, this is deeply frustrating. We have the space, the staff, and the expertise to do more—but the current payment structure makes growth financially untenable.

LD 2123 directly addresses this problem.

From my perspective as a nurse and clinical director, this bill is not abstract policy—it is the difference between telling a parent “we can help” or “you will have to keep waiting.” It is the difference between a child continuing to live with pain or returning to school healthy and confident. It allows centers like ours to continue providing high-quality, safe care without sacrificing financial viability.

The cost to the State is modest. The benefit to Maine children and families is enormous.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 2123 so that we can continue—and expand—the care we provide to MaineCare patients who so urgently need it.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to the health and well-being of Maine’s children and families.

Respectfully submitted,
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