

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Traci Dempsey, and I am an independent dental hygienist practicing in Augusta Maine. I am writing in strong support of LD 2123, which would require the Department of Health and Human Services to make supplemental payments for medically necessary deep sedation or general anesthesia provided to children receiving dental care at ambulatory surgical centers where at least 50% of patients are MaineCare members.

In my practice, I care for children every day who cannot receive dental treatment without deep sedation or general anesthesia. These are not cases of convenience. These are children with severe dental disease, extensive treatment needs, significant anxiety or trauma histories, very young children with rampant decay, and children with developmental, behavioral, or medical conditions that make routine dental care impossible in a traditional office setting.

For these patients, sedation is the only way to provide necessary dental treatment safely, completely, and without causing lasting psychological harm. Without access to deep sedation or general anesthesia, their dental disease progresses—leading to pain, infection, missed school, emergency department visits, and in some cases hospitalization. I have personally seen children suffer needlessly simply because there was no viable pathway for them to receive care in an appropriate surgical setting.

Ambulatory surgical centers play a critical role in caring for Mainecare children who require this level of anesthesia. However, the current reimbursement structure does not reflect the true cost of providing this care. Facilities and providers absorb significant financial losses when caring for these patients, which threatens the sustainability of these services and limits access for the very children who need them most.

This bill recognizes that reality. By providing supplemental payments for medically necessary sedation and anesthesia in practices that see high numbers of Mainecare patients, it helps ensure that these essential services remain available. It supports providers who are committed to serving vulnerable children and helps prevent the closure or reduction of already limited access points for surgical dental care.

From a provider perspective, this bill is about equity, access, and prevention. It allows us to treat children earlier, more completely, and more safely, reducing long-term costs to the system while sparing children and families unnecessary pain and trauma.

I urge you to support this bill and invest in the health and well-being of Maine's children. As someone who sees firsthand the consequences when care is delayed or denied, I can say with confidence that this legislation will make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Traci L. Dempsey, RDH, IPDH
Bath, Maine

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LD 2123

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