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## **Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 2123, An Act to Improve Dental Care Access for Children by Modifying the MaineCare Reimbursement Methodology for the Provision of Anesthesia for Certain Dental Services**

### **Health and Human Services Committee**

**February 4, 2026**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. We are in strong support of LD 2123, which would improve dental care access for Maine children who require anesthesia for oral health services.

While no child enjoys a trip to the dentist, most pediatric patients can grin, bear it, and open wide to receive dental care services. However, children with developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, severe dental anxiety, or certain medical conditions may require anesthesia to receive even routine, non-invasive dental care, such as an exam. Anesthesia is also an important tool for pediatric patients who may have extensive dental decay, and may need to be sedated in order to ensure the decay is treated properly and does not progress further. Anesthesia is a safe and practical tool to ensure that children are able to receive dental care without causing mental or physical harm and distress.

While anesthesia for dental care is medically necessary for many pediatric patients, reimbursement rates remain low. So low, in fact, that many dental care providers do not provide surgical care that requires anesthesia to children with MaineCare. This may cause patients to wait months to be seen by a provider able to offer anesthesia, incur costly out-of-pocket expenses, or indefinitely delay dental care, leading to poor oral health and potential health issues in the future.

LD 2123 makes it possible for more pediatric MaineCare patients to access medically necessary anesthesia and deep sedation, by supplementing payments to ambulatory surgical centers whose patient population consists of at least 50% MaineCare members.

As pediatricians, our members are dedicated to reducing dental disease among children, because oral health is vital to pediatric health. Everyday, our members see patients who are unable to receive the oral health care they desperately need. LD 2123 will help to ensure that children who are covered by MaineCare and require anesthesia are able to receive the dental services they need without anxiety, long wait times, and costly out-of-pocket expenses.

We urge you to vote 'Ought to Pass' on LD 2123. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager

Maine AAP

