



### **Testimony in Support of LD 2206:**

**“An Act Expanding Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry”**

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Montana Towers, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 2206, “An Act Expanding Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry.”

### **Expanding Access to Care in Maine**

Maine continues to face serious challenges in access to oral health care, particularly in rural and underserved regions of the state. Long wait times, limited provider availability, and workforce shortages all contribute to reduced access and higher costs for patients. Proposals that responsibly expand access to licensure, especially where professionals are already credentialed and practicing in other states or internationally, deserve serious consideration. Maine cannot afford to sideline qualified practitioners at a time when access gaps persist.

LD 2206 creates a supervised pathway that allows qualified dental graduates to practice under general supervision through a written agreement. This is a measured and practical solution to workforce shortages.

### **Occupational Licensing as a Barrier to Access**

Occupational licensing laws are often justified as consumer protection measures. In practice, however, many licensing regimes operate as government-enforced barriers that restrict workforce supply and protect existing market participants from competition.<sup>1</sup> Health care licensing systems in particular have grown increasingly complex and rigid over time. Educational equivalency mandates, duplicative credentialing requirements, and discretionary board standards frequently prevent otherwise qualified professionals from practicing, even when those individuals are already licensed, examined, and practicing safely in other jurisdictions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mainepolicy.org/let-us-work/>



When the government restricts entry into a profession beyond what is necessary to ensure safety and competence, the result is fewer providers, higher prices, longer wait times, and diminished access.

LD 2206 represents a step toward correcting that artificial constraint in the dental field. By creating a supervised pathway to licensure for qualified professionals, the bill recognizes that competency can be demonstrated through structured oversight and sustained practice, not solely through rigid educational standards. Reforming licensing laws in this way does not weaken patient protections. Rather, it strengthens the system by aligning regulation with actual risk instead of institutional gatekeeping. LD 2206 helps modernize Maine's licensing framework by recognizing alternative pathways to competence without abandoning professional standards.

## **The Broader Need for Licensing Reform in Maine**

While LD 2206 addresses barriers within the dental profession, the underlying issue extends well beyond one field. Maine maintains an expansive occupational licensing system that governs numerous professions, many of which present limited risk to public health or safety. Over time, licensing requirements have grown increasingly complex, layering education mandates, supervision rules, fees, and administrative discretion in ways that often exceed what is necessary to protect consumers.

These barriers restrict workforce mobility, discourage new entrants, and disproportionately affect professionals trained outside traditional pathways, all at a time when Maine faces persistent labor shortages.

LD 2206 reflects the important principle that competency can be demonstrated in more than one way, not solely through rigid educational standards. If Maine is serious about expanding access to care and strengthening its workforce, broader licensing reform must remain part of the policy conversation.

## **Accessibility and Affordability**

Increasing the number of qualified providers in the market directly benefits patients. More providers can improve access in underserved areas, reduce appointment wait times, lower costs, and expand the availability of services. Licensing reform is one of the most effective tools available to address workforce shortages without increasing government spending or creating new bureaucratic programs. By allowing more qualified professionals to enter the field, Maine can strengthen access to care through market-based solutions rather than regulatory expansion.



## **Conclusion**

LD 2206 reflects a thoughtful and responsible approach to licensing reform. It acknowledges workforce realities, reduces unnecessary barriers to entry, and maintains appropriate patient protections. Reforms like this, which responsibly expand access to licensure while safeguarding consumers, represent sound public policy. Maine should continue moving toward a licensing framework that welcomes qualified professionals rather than unnecessarily excluding them.

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute strongly urges this committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 2206. Thank you for your time and consideration.