



**Testimony of Becca Matusovich, Executive Director
Children's Oral Health Network of Maine
on LD 258**

An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.
Before the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services
Public Hearing: February 22, 2023

Good afternoon Senators Rotundo and Baldacci, Representatives Sachs and Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services. My name is Becca Matusovich and I am the Executive Director of the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine. Our Network is a collaborative effort, funded primarily by philanthropic dollars, which aims to create a Maine where no child suffers from preventable dental disease.

I am here today to ask you to amend LD 258 to add funding into the biennial budget to complete the expansion of the state's School Oral Health Program, a priority that was unanimously supported by both of these committees last session. Many partners are working together to protect our children and improve access to oral health care in our state - the handout attached to our testimony gives you a partial snapshot of the organizations who are part of the effort behind this bill but who may not have all been available to testify today.

Since both committees have some new members this session, a little bit of history may be helpful. In the 130th legislature, LD 1501, sponsored by Rep. Lori Gramlich, passed unanimously in 2021 and was carried over by the Appropriations Committee, which then in 2022 incorporated both the language and the funding from the fiscal note into the FY 2023 supplemental budget. The language enacted into statute (<https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3174-S.html>) required the Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program to expand to all schools by 2025. The fiscal note had projected a gradual ramp-up of funding in order to reach the full amount of funding needed to serve all schools in FY2025.

We were grateful to both of these committees for your understanding of why the expansion of the School Program and the restoration of the State Oral Health Coordinator position were so important, and we celebrated the inclusion of both in the FY2023 supplemental budget. This initial increase was an essential first step to get the expansion started. However, we were very disappointed to see that the subsequent increases for FY 2024 and 2025, as outlined in the original fiscal note, did not appear in the Governor's proposed biennial budget. We hope that this was simply an oversight and I am here today to ask you to fix this.

This is a very modest investment with a huge “bang for the buck.” The total increase for FY 2024-2025 needed to bring the program funding up to the level projected for the full expansion requires adding only \$454,474 into the biennial budget.

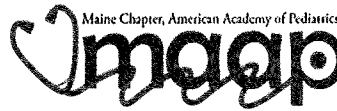
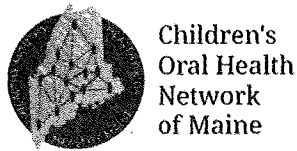
I don’t want to imply that the expansion of the School Oral Health Program will single-handedly solve the crisis of dental disease and lack of access to care that plagues our state. However, it is an absolutely essential part of the solution; it will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all of the other efforts to improve oral health in Maine.

Other speakers will share more about why the School Oral Health Program is so essential. There is a statewide fact sheet in my handouts, and I will follow up by emailing each of you a localized version for the county you represent. However, based on the unanimous support for LD 1501 last year, I believe that you all understand this case already. You understand that these funds needed represent pennies in the context of the state budget, and you already know from the communities in your district that dental disease is haunting too many Maine families. In some ways, this is such a small amount of funding that it is almost hard for people to focus on it. But it is incredibly important and I am pleading with you not to overlook it.

We took a huge step forward last session in deciding that the School Oral Health Program is an asset that has great value for every community in Maine and therefore it should be available to all schools statewide. Now is not the time to back off and leave the program stalled at the first step of a 3-year expansion process.

I will try to be at the work session and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your support on this important issue.

The following partners are unified in their support of ensuring the **Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program** has the necessary funding in the biennial budget to expand to all schools by 2025, as enacted in 22 MRSA §3174-S, sub-§2-A:



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

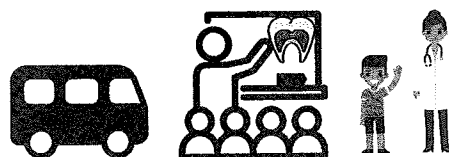


All Maine children deserve oral health care so they can stay healthy, be free from pain, and show up at school ready to learn.

22 MRSA §3174-S, sub-§2-A: <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/22/title22sec3174-S.html>

February 2023

Imagine the impact LR 1201 could have on children's oral health in Maine:



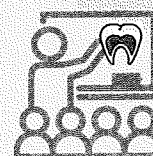
LR 1201: An Act To Reduce Dental
Disease and Ensure Access to
Essential Preventive Dental Care
among Maine Children

MAINE

K-12 school enrollment* in 2022: 172,706
*in schools with 30+ publicly funded students

221 out of 564

Maine schools currently served
by the state's School Oral
Health Program (2022-23)



*schools with 30+ publicly funded students

343 out of 564

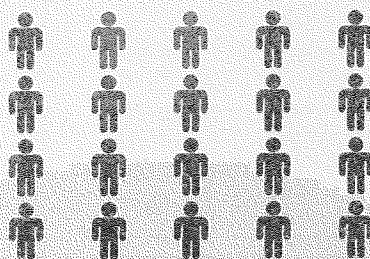
Maine schools not
currently served by the
state's School Oral Health
Program (2022-23)



61% Not currently served by the
School Oral Health Program

The School Oral Health Program provides
screenings, fluoride varnish, and sealants
for children regardless of insurance*

34% of Maine children had
either no dental benefits or
were covered by MaineCare
or commercial dental
insurance for only part of the
year in 2021.



*For children to be eligible for SOHP services, parents must return consent forms.

Number of dental offices
in Maine taking new
pediatric patients with
MaineCare, with less
than a 6-month wait for
an appointment:



*some with age or
geographic restrictions
(Fall 2022)

Percentage of
MaineCare-insured
children <21 receiving
preventive dental care
in 2021

42% of children statewide
with consistent MaineCare
coverage had at least
one preventive dental
claim in 2021

Maine ranks
48th

out of 50 states
on CMS' national PDENT measure



Children's
Oral Health
Network
of Maine

Working together to ensure that all Maine children
can grow up free from preventable dental disease.
For more info: www.maineconh.org

Data sources: Maine Kids Count, Maine CDC School Oral
Health Program, Maine Department of Education school
database, From the First Tooth, Maine Health Data Organization
All Payer Claims Database, CMS Child Core Set Measures