



Richard A. Bennett
Senator, District 18

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

**Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services on
LD 23, An Act to Extend the Period of Time a Dentist May Operate the Practice of a Deceased or Incapacitated Dentist
January 28, 2025**

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving the people of 14 towns in western Maine in the Senate. I am pleased present LD 23, "An Act to Extend the Period of Time a Dentist May Operate the Practice of a Deceased or Incapacitated Dentist."

I brought this bill forward on behalf of my constituent, Chiye Harper of Fryeburg. Chiye and her husband, Michael Harper, owned and operated the Fryeburg Dental Center. Michael was the licensed dentist and Chiye ran the books and administrative side of the practice. Tragically, last January, Michael passed away at the age of 46. His death hit the community hard. Last year, the Legislature recognized his life of service as a missionary and his service in the US Army with a sentiment in memoriam.

Under current law, the legal guardian or personal representative of a deceased or incapacitated dentist has 24 months to operate the practice. That gives Ms. Harper about a year to sell or enter into a partnership with another dentist. Frankly, she needs more time to get organized and go through with the process, especially after such a devastating loss. It is not easy to manage a bustling dental practice, sell a business, and raise four children all alone, particularly while grief-stricken. All Ms. Harper is asking of us is a little more time.

Fryeburg Dental Center has 22 employees and provides services for more than 4,000 patients. There is also a second practice, run by Chiye, right next door which is specifically for Maine Care Dental patients. This practice serves people all over Maine and gives expedited services to individuals under Maine Care. We all know about how important dentists are and that there is currently a shortage in many parts of the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration today. I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on this bill.