

**Testimony in Support of LD 1361 – “An Act to Require Insurance Coverage for Covered Dental Services Provided by Licensed Dental Hygienists and to Authorize Licensed Dental Hygienists to Bill Commercial Insurance”**

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and distinguished members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

My name is Traci Dempsey and I am a registered dental hygienist from Bath, Maine. I am also the President of the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association. I am testifying in support of LD1361.

The intent of this bill is to increase access to care and this is how this bill would impact this issue. Currently we have dental hygienists in schools seeing children. These dental hygienists are able to bill Mainecare at this time but they are unable to bill traditional dental insurance. Many times a child will be signed up for dental care at school and parents indicate that this child has Mainecare. The dental hygienist verifies the child has Mainecare and proceeds with treatment. When the provider bills Mainecare the claim is rejected because the child also has traditional insurance that was not disclosed prior to treatment. Traditional dental insurance must be billed as the primary insurance and Mainecare becomes secondary insurance. Now the dental hygienist is unable to be paid for the services they have rendered because they are not able to bill the dental insurance first and must write off the care they provided to that child. This presents a big challenge to dental hygienists providing care in school settings.

Data shows 20% of children with Mainecare have no dental home and 56% of children with traditional dental insurance do not have a dental home. This tells me we are missing an opportunity to meet these children where they are nine months out of the year. Many parents have transportation issues or are unable to get into a traditional dental practice to have their child seen. This change could have a huge impact on Maine's schoolchildren.

There has been previous legislation passed to allow independent dental hygienists to bill traditional dental insurance. It is my understanding that we will hear testimony in support of adopting that language but adapted for dental hygienists as a whole. We would also be in support of that language change. For reference that language is found at 24-A MRSA §2847-Q. This would mean replacing the existing “independent dental hygienist” with “dental hygienist” in that statute and achieving the same goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

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President  
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