



Testimony of the Maine Dental Association
before the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee

In Opposition to

LD 1615 An Act to Expand Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry

Public Hearing: Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Distinguished Members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee:

I am Therese Cahill, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Dental Association. The MDA represents all dentists in Maine and is a statewide association dedicated to promoting oral health and advancing excellence in dentistry. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The MDA is fully cognizant of the fact areas of our State, particularly northern, central, eastern, and western Maine, are profoundly underserved by dental providers, and we, in conjunction with the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association and other partners, have submitted several pieces of legislation this session to help address these concerns. However, we cannot in good conscience support LD 1615.

We have a multitude of concerns regarding this legislation, with our most pressing being the establishment of two standards of care. The Maine Board of Dental Practice (MBDP) has worked diligently over the years, in partnership with stakeholders, to establish pathways for potential licensees who did not attend a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) to become eligible for a Maine dental license. In fact, Maine is one of the few states who allow for another pathway outside of the straight CODA accreditation. Much goes into the accreditation process, as any university or college will tell you. This type of education is not easily replicated, and the current MBDP process works diligently on an individual basis to examine each application which indicates that kind of replication within the applicant's training when the applicant has not attended a CODA accredited school.

Another significant concern with this bill is it seems to imply "general supervision" by a fully licensed dentist for three (3) years is equivalent to four (4) years of intensive post-graduate doctoral education, which includes years of clinical work with "direct supervision". Many pieces of testimony have been submitted by dental professionals who have taken had this education who will counter this argument. As defined in Statute:

- **"General supervision" means the supervision of those tasks and procedures that do not require the physical presence of the supervisor in the practice**

setting while procedures are being performed but do require the tasks and procedures to be performed with the prior knowledge and consent of the supervisor. [PL 2021, c. 223, §2 (AMD).]

- **“Direct supervision” is defined as the supervision required to those tasks and procedures requiring the physical presence of the supervisor in the practice setting at the time such tasks or procedures are being performed. In order to provide direct supervision of patient treatment, the supervisor must at least identify or diagnose the condition to be treated and authorize the treatment procedure prior to implementation. [PL 2021, c. 223, §1 (AMD).]**

Lastly, I would call attention to the fact that the term “adjunct dentist” typically refers to a license held by a dentist who is teaching or supervising students at a college or university. This license often requires a current state license as a dentist and may involve teaching or supervising clinical procedures. In Maine, these licenses are either full dental or faculty licenses.

We urge this committee to reject LD 1615 and look to more thoughtful, safe and effective answers to the access issue such as scholarships for Maine students, expanding student loan forgiveness to underserved areas, and tax credits for dentists who move to Maine to start or buy a practice in the “dental desert” areas. While access to care is certainly a challenge for all of healthcare, and specifically for dental care, the people of Maine, regardless of how they are paying for their care, deserve providers who have had the extensive training as our current statute demands.

Thank you for your time and attention.