

## IN SUPPORT OF

### **L.D. 1746, An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventative Dental Care Among Maine Children**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Cross Building, Room 209

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Representative Gramlich, Senator Ingwerson, and Representatives Cloutier, Daigle, Ducharme, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Sydney Green, and I am a fourth-year medical student at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine. I have spent the past two years doing rotations throughout Maine and will be starting as a pediatric resident physician in Maine in July. I am delivering this testimony in support of LD 1746, An Act to Reduce Dental Disease and Ensure Access to Essential Preventative Dental Care Among Maine Children. The views I share are my own.

Last year, I spent the year in Bangor at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center where I had the privilege of interacting with patients from the greater Penobscot county area. It was during this time I saw many children with severe dental caries and oral health neglect. One teen came into the clinic urgently because she was experiencing significant mouth pain. Upon examining her teeth, she had numerous cavities and cracked and broken teeth. She could not remember the last time she was seen by a dentist. She told us that she had to stop brushing her teeth recently because that was causing too much pain and bleeding. Most disheartening was how common this scenario was.

The Central Public Health District of Kennebec and Somerset counties published a report in conjunction with Children's Oral Health Network of Maine in 2023 with an overview of recent oral health trends. The profile found that half of children consistently covered by MaineCare insurance did not receive dental services in 2021<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, in this region, the Maine CDC States Oral Health Program found almost *one quarter of children screened had active tooth decay (22%)*<sup>1</sup>. In the Downeast district, the number was 18%, and Cumberland was as high as 35%<sup>2</sup>.

School based prevention and mobile dental services would increase access to much needed resources for children who do not have other options. This bill helps lay groundwork for improving the oral health infrastructure in Maine. By focusing on prevention, we can support these kids in having healthy teeth and smiles. Just as important, future complications caused by poor dental hygiene are dramatically reduced – extractions, orthodontics, gum infections, and chronic disease.

Maine children deserve to grow up with healthy teeth and big smiles. Please vote in support of LD 1746. Thank you for your time.

Sydney Green

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- 1 - Maine Health Data Organization, All-Payer Claims Database. Analysis by USM Cutler Institute for the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine. <https://www.maineohn.org/assets/stock/2021-COHN-Data-Brief.pdf>
- 2 - *Maine COHN Data and Reports – Dental Care Among Children with MaineCare and Commercial Dental Benefits* (Feb. 2022). Retrieved May 3, 2025, from <https://www.maineohn.org/what-we-do/data>
- 3 - Reports, Annual Dental Claims Analysis, 2022 Maine COHN Data Brief (Feb. 2024). *Maine Oral Health Coalition*. Retrieved May 3, 2025, from <https://www.maineoralhealthcoalition.org/resources/data-and-reports/>