



## **Testimony in Support of LD 1746**

**Presented by Liz Blackwell-Moore, Director of Cumberland County Public Health**

**Date: 5.6.25**

Representative Meyer, Senator Ingwersen and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Liz Blackwell-Moore and I am the director of Cumberland County Public Health. I'm here today to speak in strong support of LD 1746. I offer this testimony on the heels of another successful year of the Cumberland County School Oral Health Project, a collaborative initiative that has already begun to change the landscape of preventative oral health access for children in schools across Cumberland County and hopefully can help other parts of the state.

Launched in July 2023 and funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, the project brings together school districts, local dental providers, the Maine CDC's School Oral Health Program, the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine, and Cumberland County Public Health. Our shared goal is simple yet transformative: to ensure that every school aged child—regardless of insurance status—can access comprehensive dental care where they already are: in school.

The need is urgent. When we started this project, in Cumberland County alone, an estimated 30,000 children received no preventive dental care at all. Most of these kids have MaineCare or no dental insurance coverage. Traditional dental offices are often inaccessible due to long waitlists or lack of providers accepting MaineCare. LD 1746 addresses this head-on by supporting school-based oral health as a sustainable, equity-focused solution.

Since the start of the project, the two local dental providers have significantly increased their capacity to provide services. They were able to do this with funds to purchase new equipment for the additional oral health providers necessary to expand services to new schools. With the additional capacity and collective outreach to schools, 20 new schools have joined the project and many others have expressed interest. This means 75% of public schools in Cumberland County are now offering comprehensive oral health services and we expect to reach close to 100% by the end of 2026. The services range from basic screenings and fluoride varnish to advanced preventive care like sealants and early cavity treatments, and even X Rays and teledentistry exams if possible—right at school. Through a partnership with Maine CDC's school oral health program, basic preventative services are provided without fees for uninsured students and students with MaineCare now have a provider able to see them regularly.

The Cumberland County school oral health project built a sustainable financial model that could guide statewide implementation of similar public-private partnership models. But this project could not have happened without funding for coordination and capacity building. Coordination is necessary to support partnerships, contracts, and billing between local dental providers, the Maine CDC school oral health program, and schools. And local dental providers need funding for the upfront costs of equipment to expand services. Once they have capacity, providing



Cumberland County  
**Public Health**

preventative oral health services is sustainable through billing Mainecare and an agreement with the Maine school oral health program.

LD 1746 would build on the momentum of the Cumberland County project by streamlining support for providers in other parts of the state, and solidifying the state's commitment to oral health for all kids. With strong data, strong partnerships, and strong outcomes already in motion, this bill will set the foundation for Maine to provide low-barrier, high-impact preventive oral healthcare for all kids.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 1746. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the health of Maine's children.