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*Testimony of Representative Holly B. Stover presenting*

## **LD 1652, An Act to Create a Tax Credit for Providers of Dental Care for MaineCare Recipients**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, I am Holly Stover. I am honored to represent House District 48. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today as sponsor of **LD 1652, An Act to Create a Tax Credit for Providers of Dental Care for MaineCare Recipients.**

Access to dental care is a critical component of overall health. Lack of access can contribute to gum disease, tooth decay and loss, and increased risk of certain diseases. Poor oral health can be painful and can take a significant emotional toll on an individual, affecting their self confidence and sometimes even their job prospects.

Despite the clear need for access to dental health care, thousands of Mainers enrolled in MaineCare face significant challenges in finding dental providers who accept their insurance. The underlying causes are well-documented: Low reimbursement rates and rising costs of doing business have made it increasingly difficult, if not completely unsustainable, for many dental professionals to serve this population. This leaves far too many individuals who rely on MaineCare without access to needed oral health care.

This bill offers a thoughtful, pragmatic solution. By creating a tax credit of up to \$5,000 to offset licensing and malpractice insurance costs, the State would provide direct, meaningful support to dental providers who serve MaineCare recipients. It is a targeted investment in oral health equity that will help stabilize and expand access to care.

In addition to the tax credit, the bill also proposes increasing reimbursement rates to 75% of the national Medicaid average and includes coverage for case management codes. These provisions

reflect a more accurate valuation of dental services and acknowledge the complexity of treating MaineCare patients—many of whom may not have seen a dentist in years due to lack of access. This will make it more feasible for providers to care for this vulnerable population.

I currently serve as the Director of Development at Lincoln County Dental, the only dental practice in our county that accepts MaineCare. As a nonprofit, we rely heavily on grants and donor support to stay financially viable. On average, we are reimbursed at 67% of the cost of dental procedures, requiring us to raise the remaining 33% through philanthropy. While this model is manageable for a nonprofit, it presents serious challenges for commercial practices trying to serve MaineCare patients sustainably.

This legislation also proposes the creation of three new positions within the Office of MaineCare Services dedicated to oral health program management. While this may seem unusual for this Committee, it is a necessary and strategic investment. Effective oversight and thoughtful implementation are essential to ensuring long-term impact and accountability in Maine's oral health system.

LD 1652 is a multi-faceted, systems-level improvement that includes essential accountability mechanisms, provider certification requirements and annual reporting to the Legislature. It is a comprehensive and responsible approach to addressing the oral health crisis faced by too many Mainers.

I urge you to support LD 1652 and help move Maine toward a more equitable and sustainable dental care system. Thank you for your consideration.