

Testimony from the University of New England Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

LD 2206, An Act Expanding Access to Oral Health Care by Creating a New Path for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry

February 24, 2026

Senator Bailey, Representative Matheison, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

The University of New England is submitting testimony Neither for Nor Against LD 2206 to offer information for the Committee's consideration. The University of New England is Maine's leading institution in educating students in healthcare professions. Located in Portland, the mission of the University of New England College of Dental Medicine (UNE CDM) is to improve the health of Northern New England as well as rural and underserved areas while shaping the future of dentistry through excellence in education, discovery, and service.

We monitored the work of the Commission to Expand Access to Oral Health Care by Studying Alternative Pathways for Obtaining a License to Practice Dentistry in 2025. We shared information with the Commission about the UNE CDM Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) Advanced Standing Track (AST) program. This is a full-time, 29-month track designed to offer dentists trained outside the United States the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge of the dental profession as practiced in the United States. The UNE College of Dental Medicine is accredited to accept two DMD Advanced Standing Track students each year, but this number may vary. For example, this number may be higher if there are additional open spots in the traditional 4-year DMD program. Graduates of the DMD AST earn a Commission of Dental Accreditation (CODA) U.S. Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degree. These graduates are then eligible for licensure under Maine's current dental licensure rules.

We understand the goal of this legislation coming out of the Commission is to provide a pathway for foreign-trained dentists to obtain licensure in Maine. UNE supports this goal, as evidenced by our commitment to sustaining the AST program. We would caution the committee that, as drafted, LD 2206 would open the door for graduates from non-accredited U.S.-based dental schools to become licensed in the State. Section 4 sub 7 in the bill specifically allows for graduates of U.S.-based schools to apply for an associate dentist license. This language does not seem consistent with the goal of providing a pathway to licensure for foreign-trained dentists. We would recommend limiting the associate dentist license to graduates of international dental schools.

We would also like to highlight the importance of the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) in ensuring high quality education and care in the dental profession. CODA accredits predoctoral, advanced, and allied dental education programs in the United States and internationally. It is an

independent body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education that is responsible for developing and approving accreditation standards, making accreditation decisions on educational programs, and developing and approving procedures that are used in the accreditation process. The structure of CODA is such that communities of interest are represented.

At its core, CODA exists to protect patients. By enforcing high educational standards, CODA ensures that graduates from accredited programs have the baseline competency required to care for patients safely. For a dentist or dental hygienist, graduating from a CODA-accredited program is almost always a legal requirement for licensure.

UNE would be happy to provide additional information to the Committee on our programming or other relevant topics as necessary. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

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University of New England