

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Lorraine Klug from the city of Ellsworth and I am testifying in support of LD 1026. I am the President of the Maine Dental Hygienists' Association and I was also President in 2014 when the legislation for the dental therapist passed here in Maine. At that time, we were only the 2nd state to establish the dental therapist and now there are 14 states across the country. The biggest obstacle to becoming a dental therapist is obtaining the education and training because there are only 3 educational programs in the country which are in Alaska, Washington and Minnesota. We have only had 2 dental therapists in Maine in the past couple years and they both moved here from Minnesota. We are in desperate need of dental restorative services and with the passage of adult MaineCare benefits, they are sought after more than ever. Our biggest issue...not enough providers. The dental therapist is a way to provide more access to care and ease that shortage but we need the education and training and what better way than to establish a program right here in Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.