



Facial and Oral Surgery Associates

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**Testimony in Support
LD 665, An Act to Promote Better Dental Care for Cancer Survivors**

March 18, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and Members of the Health Care, Insurance and Financial Services Committee:

My name is Dr. Robert Berube and I'm testifying in support of **LD 665, An Act to Promote Better Dental Care for Cancer Survivors.**

I have practiced oral surgery and have treated cancer patients on a daily basis in Augusta for the past 28 years. I work closely with my oncology colleagues at the Maine General Hospital / Alford Cancer Center, providing surgical services for head and neck cancer patients.

As you can imagine it's devastating to hear "you have cancer" but almost unimaginable when the doctor says "we can't begin your cancer treatment until we correct your dental issues." Many of my patients have adequate medical insurance but lack dental coverage allowing them to proceed with their life saving care.

Patients with dental infections and advanced decay can not proceed with their urgent chemotherapy or radiation therapy for fear of severe infection once treatment has begun. The standard of care dictates that the patient be "infection risk-free" before treatment begins. The lack of dental insurance coverage is more often than not the limiting barrier to care. If a patient's medical insurance were to cover their acute dental issues allowing them to proceed with their cancer treatment, there would be a seamless pathway forward eliminating care delays and optimizing positive oncologic outcomes.

Dental services for cancer patients covered by their medical insurance is a critically important opportunity for these desperate patients navigating the most terrifying event in their lives.

Sincerely yours,

R. Robert Berube, DDS