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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony in Support of LD 441 An Act To Expand Adult Dental Health Insurance Coverage

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Good morning Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Heidi Brooks and I represent House District 61, which is part of Lewiston. I am presenting LD 441, An Act To Expand Adult Dental Health Insurance Coverage.

There is a dental health crises in Maine. This bill seeks to help address this issue by having health insurance plans offer comprehensive dental care. Dental care is critical to overall health. Comprehensive dental care could help prevent disease and serious complication from severe dental infections. Patients experience pain and suffering with untreated advanced dental disease. They often present to the emergency room where the only treatment options may include antibiotics, pain medication and a referral to a dentist or oral surgeon. If the patient can not afford treatment, they may be left to suffer. An untreated infection can cause very serious complications and could be fatal.

Poor dental health could also be a barrier to employment and self-esteem.

If a patient has medical insurance, having comprehensive dental benefit could improve their health significantly. Although this bill would apply to private insurance policies, there is also an issue with dentists and oral surgeons not accepting MaineCare patients. This bill also seeks to have the Maine Health Data Organization have a publicly accessible database of dental providers who accept MaineCare.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

District 61 Lewiston (part)

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