

April 27, 2021

Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Testimony by the University of New England College of Dental Medicine in Support of LD 25 An Act To Modify the Qualifications for Resident Dentist Licensure

Good afternoon. I am Jon Ryder, Dean of the University of New England College of Dental Medicine (UNE CDM). Today, I am presenting comments on behalf of the UNE CDM in support of LD 25 An Act To Modify the Qualifications for Resident Dentist Licensure

We support this legislation which would remove barriers for graduates from a dental program to seek further education and training in Maine. This can benefit the State of Maine by creating a new pathway for licensure for dentists and dental specialists that can address the state's workforce shortage. Additionally, it will attract citizens and permanent residents who have dental degrees from other countries to move, study, work and live in Maine.

Since graduating our first class in 2017, 63 of our graduates have chosen to practice in Maine across 11 different counties and in a variety of practice settings including FQHCs and non-profit clinics. However, Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas persist in the state; an aging workforce and an increasing and diversifying population suggests that a strong pipeline of dentists is still needed in Maine. LD 25 will allow the UNE CDM to attract a qualified and diversified pool of candidates to expand existing programs and potentially offer specialty programs to address workforce issues. Passage of this legislation builds on the foundation that the UNE CDM has already established, as well as providing new opportunities to provide advanced dental training programs.

Postdoctoral residency programs allow dental school graduates to continue training and achieve high-level knowledge and skills in specific areas of dentistry. The UNE CDM is currently exploring the possibility of offering a postdoctoral residency program for dental graduates who wish to receive advanced dental training. It is important to note that many (if not most) of the potential applicants to a postdoctoral residency program are currently living in the U.S. and are either citizens or permanent residents, but received their dental education outside of the U.S. Without this legislation, the potential applicant pool for the contemplated programs will be less diverse and possibly bar members of our own communities from applying.

We applaud the efforts of this legislation to remove barriers for foreign-trained dentists to seek education in our state and potentially join the growing pipeline of UNE-trained dentists who are choosing to practice in our rural and underserved communities. We hope that you will extend to

the UNE CDM the privilege to educate dental professionals who will fulfill their obligations to improve the oral health, overall health and quality of life of the people of Maine with integrity, compassion and respect.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at today's public hearing. On behalf of the UNE College of Dental Medicine community, I am available to answer any questions related to our statement. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JSR', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon S. Ryder, D.D.S, M.S.

Dean

UNE College of Dental Medicine