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MARK D. ZAJKOWSKI, D.D.S., M.D.
CHAIR OF THE MAINE BOARD OF DENTAL PRACTICE

IN SUPPORT OF 25

“An Act to Modify the Qualifications for Resident Dentist Licensure”
(Emergency)

Sponsored by Senator Brenner

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

April 27, 2021 10:00 A.M.

Good morning Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and Members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Mark Zajkowski and I am the Chair of the Maine Board of Dental Practice. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on LD 25.

The Board of Dental Practice (“the Board”) is a professional licensing board affiliated with the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation (“the DPFR”), and its sole purpose is to protect the public health and welfare of Maine citizens. The Board accomplishes this mission by ensuring that the public is served by competent and honest practitioners through its licensure process, conducting investigations into allegations of unprofessional conduct and imposing sanctions when deemed appropriate.

LD 25 is a proposal submitted by the Board to further streamline the licensure qualifications in its statutes and rules by removing barriers to otherwise qualified applicants. Specifically, LD 25 proposes to amend the Dental Practice Act for resident dentist licensure as follows:

1. Amends the educational requirements for resident dentist licensure by authorizing the Board to consider the educational equivalent of a doctoral degree in dentistry on a case by case basis. Not all dentists enrolled in a residency program received a doctoral degree from a program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (“CODA”). This statutory authority would allow the Board consider applicants seeking to obtain resident dentist licensure to obtain clinical, supervised experiences in some of Maine’s most underserved areas.

2. Amends the examination language to make clear that the only examination requirement is the Board's jurisprudence examination. Under the current regulations both the national and the regional examinations for dentistry are required. There are some dentist residents that are attempting to qualify for access to those examinations by virtue of completing a CODA residency program. Again, this is an unnecessary requirement given the restrictions of the resident dentist license to practice under supervision of a dentist and in board approved settings to ensure appropriate public protection.

The Board has been working with a number of stakeholders such as educational institutions, dental clinics, federally qualified health centers, non-profit organizations all of whom have indicated the value in bringing dental students to Maine to not only obtain the advanced dental training, but to provide much needed oral health care to regions in the state that have limited access or in some instances, no access to dental care.

Additionally, the Board is working with dental students who wish to begin their residency training in Maine this summer, but do not meet either the CODA accreditation requirement or the national/regional examination requirement. Their options are either forego their advanced training opportunity in Maine or navigate dental licensure in another state and then apply via the Board's endorsement provisions.

Simply put, LD 25 removes barriers to licensure while maintaining the Board's authority to consider and evaluate dentist resident applicants on a case by case basis to uphold its statutory mandate to protect the public.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at work session.