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**Testimony of the Maine Dental Association  
Before the Health Coverage, Insurance and Services Committee**

**Testimony in Support of  
LD 1629, An Act Regarding the Qualifications for Licensure as a Physician or Surgeon**

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

My name is Angela Westhoff and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Dental Association. The MDA is a statewide association dedicated to advancing excellence in dentistry. The MDA represents 85% of the dentists in Maine; there are 774 practicing and retired dentists who are active members of the association.

On behalf of the MDA, I am providing testimony in support of **LD 1629, An Act Regarding the Qualifications for Licensure as a Physician or Surgeon.**

As background, I offer the following historical and recent information on dentists practicing in Maine.

In 2012, the University at Albany's Center for Health Workforce Studies at the School of Public Health, conducted a study of Maine's oral health workforce. The results of a survey of dentists did indeed point to a high percentage of dentists who expected to retire within 5 years.

*Dentists in Maine are predominantly older, White males. One-quarter of actively practicing dentists expect to retire within the next five years. Dentists were mainly non-Hispanic White. Dentists in Maine were predominately male (80.4%). They were more racially and ethnically diverse than the population in the state but were less diverse than dentists in the U.S. The mean age of dentists was 54 years (ME BDE, 2011). Almost one-quarter of survey respondents (23.7%) expected to retire within the next five years and an additional 16.3% expected to reduce their work hours over the same time period.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> [Microsoft Word - OHWkfc.ME.130221 \(mehaf.org\)](https://www.mehaf.org/OHWkfc.ME.130221)

The fact of the matter is by 2016 the mean age of dentists had dropped to 51 and the number of actively practicing dentists continues to increase. Below is the most recent information on dentists practicing in the United States published on the American Dental Association’s website:

[Supply & Profile of Dentists – ADA Health Policy Institute Data Center.](#)

**Table 3: Dentists Working in Dentistry**

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
188,884	191,389	192,271	195,770	196,468	198,517	199,486	200,419	201,117	<b>Total U.S.</b>
663	695	677	683	674	701	712	737	740	<b>Maine</b>

In large part, we attribute this exceptional increase in the number of dentists practicing in our state to UNE’s College of Dental Medicine and the excellent quality of life Maine offers. In 2017, UNE’s College of Dental Medicine’s first class graduated; since then, 63 UNE CDM graduates have chosen to remain in Maine to practice.

In 2020 there were 201,111 actively practicing dentists in the United States and just 7,529 oral and maxillofacial surgeons.<sup>2</sup>

Before you today, is Dr. Kristopher Cooper, a qualified Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, one of us, who wants to bring his family home. But the current statute (32 MRSA §3271, sub-§2) prevents Dr. Cooper from obtaining a license as a medical doctor. Maine is the only state where Dr. Cooper does not qualify for a medical license.

With the existing prohibitive, unclear statutory language, which LD 1629 seeks to correct, Maine will continue to lag behind other New England states and the rest of the country in efforts to recruit oral and maxillofacial surgeons.

LD 1629 provides a significant opportunity for Maine to level the playing field in our ongoing efforts to recruit physicians, dentists, and other essential health care providers. I urge you to vote in support of this critical legislation and thank you for your time and attention.

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<sup>2</sup> [Supply of Dentists in the U.S.: 2001-2020](#) (XLSX - Published January 2021)