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Testimony in support of LD 1501, “An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine”

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Senator Mattie Daughtry and I represent Senate District 24, which includes the towns of Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, North Yarmouth, and Pownal. I’m here today to speak in support of LD 1501, “An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine.”

Keeping your mouth healthy is a critical part of living a healthy life. Though we may hear about exercise and eating healthy more often, keeping up on dental health is equally important. And this is especially true for children and young adults. Making sure young people maintain good dental hygiene and develop good habits early on can lay the groundwork for a healthy life. But at the same time, a failure to get regular cleanings and keep up with brushing and flossing could lead to a lifetime of pain, expensive procedures and additional health issues. Unfortunately today, there are many Maine children not receiving adequate dental care, and this issue has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. In fact, about 40 percent of children consistently covered on MaineCare, and 30 percent of children consistently covered on commercial insurance plans did not receive preventative oral health services during the last year.

LD 1501 will help us address this issue. It would get more dental care services to kids all over Maine by expanding the school-based oral health program and would reinstate a critical oral health coordinator position at DHHS. In addition, the bill would require that oral health is covered in the annual report from DHHS, allowing us to legislate more effectively and address issues that arise.

Poor oral health at a young age can lead to a plethora of issues down the line. We must do our part to support Maine children and ensure that they don’t grow up with pain and disease that could have been stopped with simple proactive care.

Thank you for your time, and I would urge you to vote ought to pass.