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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 1501 An Act To Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine

April 26, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support LD 1501 An Act To Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and more. One of our agencies includes a Federally Qualified Health Center which includes a dental clinic and several provide some form of oral care, from tooth sealing for children to a mobile dental unit.

How did the mouth and teeth get separated from the rest of our bodies? Who decided health care skipped right over our mouths?

We know that our mouths and teeth are an important part of our health, from eating and drinking to the biome that lives in them. It is also the one of the first things people see when they meet you – your smile puts people at ease, shows them you are friendly and lets people approach you openly. When you smile shows missing teeth, or rotten teeth, people judge you differently and that makes a difference. It is harder to find jobs, especially customer facing jobs; it is harder to make friends or find romance; it points you out as someone with lower income.

Ensuring all children have access to comprehensive dental care sets them up for a healthier, happier adulthood. The more accessible the care is, including at school, the more likely the program will be used consistently, and we know that with dental health, consistency is key.

This is not a luxury or an expensive benefit to add, yet it is an important one. Please support LD 1501.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)