



April 19, 2021

Stephen C. Mills, DDS
Diplomate, American Board of Pediatric Dentistry
Testimony Before the Health and Human Services Committee

In Reference to:

LD 1501 An Act To Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine
Public Hearing April 27, 2021 Zoom Conference, 1:00 pm

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Stephen C Mills, DDS, and I am writing in enthusiastic support of LD 1501. I have been a dentist for forty years and a pediatric dentist in Maine for 34 years. I spent my career trying to serve as many of the children in the State of Maine as I could covering all potential categories of socioeconomic background, racial background, and any other characteristic one might name. Now, as I enter a new life of active "retirement" I am dedicating myself to focusing on serving a greater number of children as a group, beyond what I have tried to do one child at a time in my private practice. LD 1501 is a practical and realistic effort to try to reach out to all of the children of Maine to help them get the dental care that they need.

We all have been made aware of what has been termed the "access to care" issues in Maine. This is not one problem but really a complex set of circumstances such as oral health literacy and culture, not enough dentists to satisfy the need, family difficulties accessing dental appointments and financial barriers to name a few. But the bottom line is that for a variety of reasons too many children are not able to get adequate dental care. It is time to reach out to where the children are. What better place than in the school system? A school-based program for those who cannot access the private world of dentistry just makes so much sense. I realize that the program focuses on preventive dental care mostly but isn't that the most important thing for our school age children? We need to continue to create a statewide culture that tells us that oral health is an essential part of total health and that you cannot be completely healthy without good oral health.

But any program such as this needs leadership and guidance and for that reason that an Oral Health Coordinator in the Department of Health and Human Services is an almost mandatory addition to this legislation. To create such a position would be the best step to ensure that the program runs smoothly and equitably throughout the state.

This is an important step for the children of Maine and one that can continue to grow to ensure that all of the children of Maine grow up free of preventable disease and with excellent oral health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen C. Mills DDS". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen C Mills, DDS, FICD, DABPD, FASD