



**Melanie Sachs**

84 Kelsey Ridge Road

Freeport, ME 04032

Residence: 207-299-6825

[Melanie.Sachs@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Melanie.Sachs@legislature.maine.gov)

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

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***Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs, in support of LDs 62, 72, 996 and 1501 before the  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services***

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Melanie Sachs, and I am honored to represent House District 48, which includes Freeport and part of Pownal. I am here in full support of the slate of oral health bills before you today.

I have come before this Committee recently to discuss the need to expand health care services for children through school-based centers, several of which have oral health services attached. Thus you may not be surprised at my supportive testimony of these bills today. There is no shortage of data linking better health outcomes with dental care. As noted by the federal government's [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#):

Oral diseases ranging from dental caries (cavities) to oral cancers cause pain and disability for millions of Americans. The impact of these diseases does not stop at the mouth and teeth. A growing body of evidence has linked oral health, particularly periodontal (gum) disease, to several chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. In pregnant women, poor oral health has also been associated with premature births and low birth weight. These conditions may be prevented in part with regular visits to the dentist.

This same report indicates that the systemic disparities in care that are so often noted by this Committee, where racial and income inequities exist in outcomes and access, are found in the oral health system of care as well. These oral health bills before you directly attempt to address issues of inequity.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for these pieces of legislation.