LD 1501: An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine

Sponsor: Rep. Lori Gramlich
Voted unanimous OTP-A by HHS Committee 5/4/2021

All Maine children deserve oral health care so they can stay healthy, be free from pain, and show up at school ready to learn.

LD 1501 would:

• Expand Maine’s school-based oral health program so all K-12 schools can participate by 2025. Currently, only 1/3 of elementary schools participate due to eligibility and capacity limitations.
• Re-establish a full-time oral health coordinator position at the Maine CDC, which was eliminated 7 years ago, and would be the only position in state government specifically focused on oral health.
• Direct MaineCare to begin a value-based payment pilot for oral health services in school and pre-school settings and analyze how to maximize federal matching funds for these services, and
• Build into MaineCare’s annual legislative report the status of school oral health services and methods to maximize paying for them with Medicaid funding.

Dental pain is the most common chronic childhood disease and one of the top reasons children miss school, yet dental disease is largely preventable using cost-effective methods.

This bill is a good investment because:

• 43% of Maine children didn’t have consistent dental insurance in 2019 and were less likely to receive any dental care as a result.¹
• The lifetime cost of a cavity is enormous compared to preventive services.²
• Having a state oral health coordinator provides leadership on oral health issues and increases Maine’s capacity to apply for available federal funding.
• Every $1 state general fund dollar spent on children’s dental services paid for by MaineCare brings in almost $2.50 in federal match.³

This is a winnable battle that improves our children’s health and lifetime success in return for modest state investment.

Sources cited
2) https://www.cdhp.org/resources/298-lifetime-costs-of-a-cavity-by-delta-dental
LD 1501 is necessary to reduce COVID-19 oral health disparities in Maine children

The pandemic has made it harder to see a dentist and reduced the limited oral health services some children were getting in schools.

Number of dental claims for Maine residents 2019-2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>MaineCare</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January - December 2019</td>
<td>693,455</td>
<td>126,883</td>
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<tr>
<td>January - December 2020</td>
<td>593,947</td>
<td>85,508</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number fewer claims</td>
<td>99,508</td>
<td>41,375</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage decrease</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>-33%</td>
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Source: https://mhdo.maine.gov/tableau/data.cshtml

Fewer Mainers are getting oral health care because of the pandemic – especially MaineCare members.

Fewer children are getting preventive services. Hygienists providing care through the School Oral Health Program are reporting higher rates of decay due to missed care.

Percentage of Maine children screened by the School Oral Health Program with untreated decay, 2018-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2018</th>
<th>Fall 2019</th>
<th>Fall 2020</th>
<th>Fall 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Maine School Oral Health Program
We Support LD 1501: An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine

We, the undersigned health providers and organizations in Maine, support LD 1501 as an important step to ensure that all children can grow up with good oral and overall health. LD 1501 would:

- Expand Maine’s school-based oral health program to all schools statewide by 2025.
- Re-establish a full-time oral health coordinator position at the Maine CDC, which was eliminated 7 years ago.
- Direct MaineCare to begin a value-based payment pilot for oral health services in school and childcare settings and consider how to maximize federal matching funds for these services, and
- Build into MaineCare’s annual report to the Health and Human Services committee the status of oral health services provided in schools and methods for maximizing Medicaid funding for school-based oral health services.

Dental caries is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and dental pain is one of the top reasons why children miss school. This is a winnable battle. LD 1501 will have a significant impact on our children’s health and lifetime success.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS
Brewer School Department
Community Concepts, Inc.
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Falmouth Middle School
Hall-Dale High School and Middle School
Helping Hands with Heart/
Maine Highlands Investment Partnership
Kennebec Valley Family Dentistry
Living with Peace International
Maine Association of School Nurses
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Maine Children’s Alliance
Maine Dental Association
Maine Dental Health Out-Reach, Inc.
Maine Dental Hygienists’ Association
Maine Equal Justice
Maine Oral Health Coalition
Maine Parent Federation
Maine Primary Care Association
Maine Public Health Association
Maine’s Teeth
MSAD 52
MSAD 59
Multicultural Community and Family Support Services
New England Rural Health Association
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
Nomadic Pastoralist Development
Oceanside High School
RSU 10
Smart Health Consultancy
Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation
The Bingham Program
The Opportunity Alliance
University of New England College of Dental Medicine
Waterville Community Dental Center

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