

# 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.<sup>1</sup>
- The lifetime cost of a cavity is enormous compared to preventive services.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>

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



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### Sources cited

- 1) <https://www.mainepecoh.org/publications/databrief.pdf>
- 2) <https://www.cdhp.org/resources/298-lifetime-costs-of-a-cavity-by-delta-dental>
- 3) <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/federal-matching-rate-and-multiplier>

# 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.

**Dental care is kids' No. 1 unmet health need during pandemic**  
By Theresa Pablos, DrBicuspid.com editor in chief

February 9, 2021 -- Dental care topped the list of children's unmet healthcare needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published on February 6 in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. That risk was even higher for children whose parents lost a job or income.

Source: <https://www.drbcusp.com/index.aspx?sec=ser&sub=def&pag=dis&ItemID=328050>

Number of dental claims for Maine residents 2019-2020

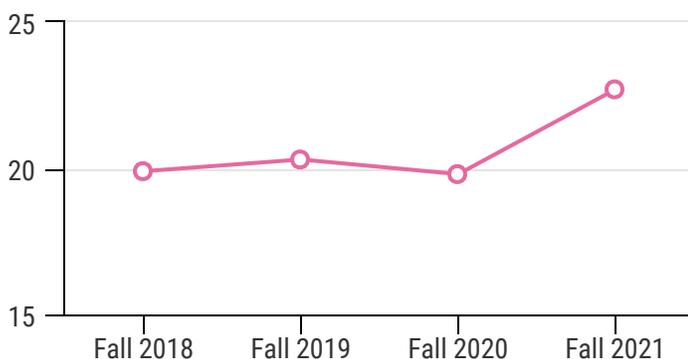
	Commercial	MaineCare
January - December 2019	693,455	126,883
January - December 2020	593,947	85,508
Number fewer claims	99,508	41,375
Percentage decrease	-14%	-33%

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

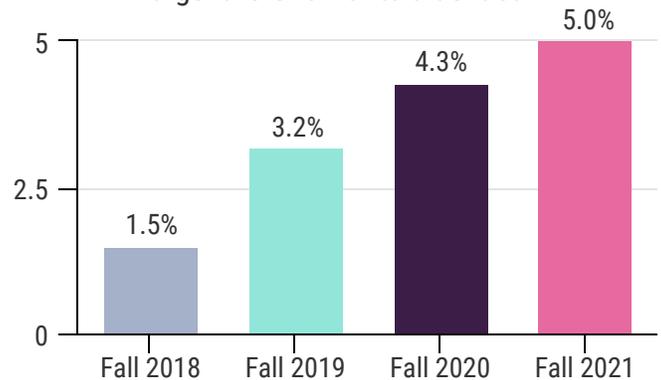
Source: <https://mhdo.maine.gov/tableau/data.cshtml>

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



Percentage of children screened by the School Oral Health Program who needed an urgent referral for to a dentist



Source: Maine School Oral Health Program



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Working together to ensure that all Maine children can grow up free from preventable dental disease.  
[www.mainepeoh.org](http://www.mainepeoh.org)

# 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  
Mainely 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  
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