



Testimony before the Health and Human Services Committee

**LD 1955, An Act To Promote Cost-effectiveness in the MaineCare Program and Improve the Oral Health of Maine Adults and Children**

Hillary Colcord, Health Equity Program Manager, Maine Primary Care Association  
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Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Hillary Colcord and I am the Health Equity Program Manager for the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA), a member association which includes all of Maine's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs). Maine's CHCs provide comprehensive primary and preventive care for approximately 1 in 6 Maine people. Oral health care is one of the core services that our health centers are required to offer, either on-site or through coordinated referrals.

Community Health Centers make up the largest primary care network in the state and also provide high quality, comprehensive dental care to Maine people. Historically, Maine's CHCs have provided millions of dollars in uncompensated dental care each year, due in large part to the lack of Medicaid reimbursement for preventive services. This loss is simply not sustainable for our health centers, or for the patients they serve. Without compensated care, health centers struggle to meet the growing dental needs of patients and rising operational costs. With an adult benefit under the MaineCare program, health centers would be able to provide more low-cost screenings, cleanings, and other oral health services to their patients without compromising their financial viability.

I speak with oral health providers in our network on a regular basis. Dentists, hygienists, dental assistants and other health center staff see the damaging results from lack of preventive care every day. Too often, they are seeing their adult patients once it is too late to prevent dental decay and disease, making it necessary to provide more intensive and costly interventions to restore baseline oral health.

This isn't just an oral health issue; it's also a health equity issue. According to a report from the DentaQuest Foundation, 93% of individuals living in poverty have unmet dental needs, compared to 58% in higher-income families. People living in poverty spend ten times more of their annual family income proportionally on dental services compared to higher income families.

In closing, an adult dental benefit under MaineCare is a win-win for our health center safety net providers, the low-income patients they serve, and our state economy, as we know that when people have good oral health, they are more likely to feel confident to engage in employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. If there is any additional information that MPCA or our members could provide, please don't hesitate to contact me at [hcolcord@mepca.org](mailto:hcolcord@mepca.org).