

Testimony before the Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services Committee

**LD 615, An Act To Remove the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification Requirement for Dental Therapists**

Beth Pearce, Oral Health Coordinator, Maine Primary Care Association  
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Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee—I am Beth Pearce, and I serve as Oral Health Coordinator for the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

I am presenting testimony today in support of LD 615, *An Act To Remove the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification Requirement for Dental Therapists*. On behalf of MPCA and its members, which include all of Maine's 19 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and one FQHC Look-Alike, I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of this bill. Maine's FQHCs, also known as Community Health Centers, 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.

I speak with health centers on a regular basis and am keenly aware of their challenges in finding qualified oral health providers. Maine has an acute shortage of dental providers and the pandemic has further served to highlight critical access to care challenges, as well as the worsening of dental disease that many Mainers are experiencing.

The purpose of a mid-level provider such as a dental therapist is expressly to fill the gaps where dentists are not practicing and to serve patients in underserved and rural areas. Given the state's rapidly aging dental workforce, Maine will benefit greatly from this provider type serving its communities. To this end, I am pleased to share that the first dental therapist to have their application for licensure approved will be working at one of the community health centers we support.

The licensing requirement for general dentists and dental hygienists is at that of the lower level of life saving certification of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). Therefore, to require Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) of a dental therapist as part of the licensure process is an undue burden and further aggravates the issue of access to care.

Additionally, all licensed dental providers are already required to have an Emergency Protocol, per Board of Dental Practice Rule Chapter 12, thus ensuring that safety measures are in place by all licensees.

In closing, the removal of this requirement and the implementation of CPR, the same level of life saving certification as other licensees, is an appropriate change and one we support.

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 on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me at [bpearce@mepca.org](mailto:bpearce@mepca.org).