



**Testimony of Dr. Abhay Ektare, DDS  
Eastport Health Care**

**In Support of LD 1287: "An Act to Strengthen Efforts to Recruit and Retain Primary Care Professionals and Dentists in Rural and Underserved Areas of the State"**

**Monday, April 24, 2017**

Senator Dow, Representative Tipping and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, my name is Dr. Abhay Ektare and I practice dentistry at Eastport Health Care (EHC). I provide dental services to close to 3000 patients. I am sorry that I am unable to attend the Public Hearing today, but I am pleased to submit written testimony in strong support of LD 1287.

I was practicing in Arizona in 2009 when I read an article in a national newspaper about a shortage of dentists in Maine. At the time, as a recent graduate, my priority was to try and pay down my student loans. I wanted to continue in public health. I picked Eastport randomly and decided it would be a good fit. I did not plan to stay more than 2 years. After I arrived, I qualified for the National Health Service Corps' loan repayment program and then later, the 5 year state tax credit program.

The tax credit incentive was a significant reason I decided to stay. This is my 7<sup>th</sup> year here and I plan to remain in this community as long as I'm welcome. My patients have always been appreciative but I have found that with continuity of care, we have been able to build greater trust and lasting relationships in the community. Given the turnover every few years at the clinic in the past, patients were also reluctant to commit to regular, comprehensive care. The longer I stay here, the more it becomes apparent to me that 99% of dentistry is about building those relationships. I am very grateful to my patients and feel accepted and appreciated by the community. I would say that in my case, the incentive to recruit and retain health care professionals in a rural setting worked as intended.

Since I began in 2010, we have expanded a lot. We have grown to hire an additional hygienist and another dentist. We offer a greater range of services but we are still booking out 3-4 months in advance. Due to the retirement of dentists in the county and due to turnover at other public health clinics, we expect to be even busier in the near future. The benefits of living and working in a rural community were not apparent to me out of dental school as I am a 'city kid' and never expected to be live where I live today. Without the financial incentive to help pay back my student loans, I would probably have never considered what turned out to be a wonderful place to live and work.

I respectfully urge the Taxation Committee to vote unanimously in support of LD 1287. Thank you for your consideration and support.

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