

Kelli Whitlock Burton
Suit Up Maine
LD1955

Chair Grattwick, Chair Hymanson, and committee members:

I am a co-leader of Suit Up Maine, a statewide, all-volunteer, nonpartisan grassroots group representing more than 5,000 people in all 16 counties. On behalf of our group, I am writing in support of LD 1955. A study by the Muskie School of Public Service found that dental disease was the most common reason for ER visits for people age 15-44 who receive MaineCare or who are uninsured. That study identified access to preventive dental care as a critical area for policy intervention. Another survey by the American Dental Association found that 1 in 5 low-income Mainers say their mouth and teeth are in poor condition and nearly 30% experience at least occasional dental pain. One in five low-income Mainers say that the appearance of their teeth has negatively impacted their performance in job interviews. And in more than 60% of cases, the reason for poor dental health is the high cost of dental care. Research suggests that preventive dental care is far less expensive than emergency treatment and can improve overall health, suggesting adding dental services to MaineCare could reduce overall health care spending. The MaineCare coverage expansion is estimated to cost \$6.4 million annually, but would bring in \$17 million in federal dollars. Thirty-five states offer at least limited adult dental benefits through Medicaid. I urge the committee to make Maine the 36th state.