



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In support of LD 1453

An Act To Improve Dental Health for Maine Children and Adults with Low Incomes

April 17, 2019

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in strong support of LD 1453, *An Act To Improve Dental Health for Maine Children and Adults with Low Incomes*.

Dental care is health care. Having access to the full range of health care women need throughout our lives includes preventative and routine dental care. Too many people in our state can't access this important care, especially people with lower incomes. As you've heard, unmet dental needs have human and economic costs, and we believe that increased access to no and low-barrier dental care will have far-reaching positive economic impacts on our residents, especially lower income women, and the entire state.

In Maine, 45% of people with low income say they avoid smiling because of the state of their teeth and mouth; 1 in 3 people say the appearance of their teeth and mouth affects their ability to get a job.ⁱ Diminished appearance resulting from dental problems can contribute to social isolation, lower wages, and loss of self-esteem,ⁱⁱ and we believe that LD 1453 is the pathway toward eliminating these challenges for some of our most vulnerable residents who deserve the opportunity to gain confidence, make a stable income, and support themselves and their families. We strongly urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1453. Thank you for your time.

ⁱ American Dental Association. Retrieved at: <https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/OranHealthWell-Being-StateFacts/Maine-Oral-Health-Well-Being.pdf>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Oral Health Strategic Framework, 2014–2017. Retrieved at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4765973/>

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