

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 955

S. P. 325

In Senate, March 5, 1979

Referred to the Committee on Health and Institutional Services. Sent down for concurrence and ordered printed.

Presented by Senator Najarian of Cumberland.

Cosponsor: Senator Silverman of Washington.

MAY M. ROSS, Secretary of the Senate

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-NINE

AN ACT to Provide Assistance to Certain Elderly Persons Needing Dentures.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

Sec. 1. Dental Health Program Fund. There is established within the Department of Human Services, Office of Dental Health, a fund the purpose of which is to support a pilot project to provide aid to those elderly adults who in the opinion of a dentist need full dentures.

Sec. 2. Administration of the program. The fund shall be administered by the Office of Dental Health that shall establish procedures and guidelines for providers of services and determine specific eligibility criteria with the advice of the Dental Health Council.

Sec. 3. Eligibility for dental services; fees. Any adults who are eligible for any benefits under the Title XIX Medicaid Program or who otherwise are in financial need under guidelines established by the Office of Dental Health and who in the opinion of a dentist are in need of full dentures shall be eligible for aid under this project. The Director of the Office of Dental Health shall establish a schedule of fees based on the income of the applicant for services. Provisions shall be made for services at no cost to those persons unable to afford any fee.

Sec. 4. Services to be provided. The dental services to be funded shall include only provision for new full dentures.

Sec. 5. Dental service providers. Dental services shall be provided under contract by a professionally qualified cost effective and responsible provider or providers selected by the Office of Dental Health through a competitive bidding process.

Sec. 6. Reports and recommendations. The fund shall be available for expenditures on dental services until December 31, 1980. Prior to that date the Office of Dental Health shall submit a report to the Legislature explaining services provided, the delivery mechanism and detailed recommendations for the future funding and provision of dental health services.

Sec. 7. Appropriation. The following funds shall be appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this Act.

1979-80

HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF

All Other

\$150,000

STATEMENT OF FACT

The purpose of this bill is to improve the dental health of adults in the State who are in acute need of care and who are without the financial means to pay for necessary care.

Dental disease is a major public health problem in Maine. The Federal Government reports that Maine has the worst rate of dental disease in the country. Dental disease affects 98% of the population and has been called the State's number one health problem. Studies by the United States Public Health Service show that 50% of those 65 years old or older have lost all of their teeth in one or both jaws.

According to the 1970 report of the Governor's Committee on Aging: "It is generally recognized that Maine has a serious dental problem at all age levels caused by lack of dentists, inaccessibility to present dentists by many people and a general lack of concern and understanding on the part of the populace. The problems of dental health become acute as inadequate dentition and ill-fitting dentures contribute to undernutrition in old age. Poor dentition results in inadequate preparation of food for digestion and leads to a gradual avoidance of foods which require chewing. Thus, important food items like meat and bulk-forming fruit and vegetables are gradually and progressively bypassed. In rural areas, it is estimated that 22% of the elderly have never seen a dentist, as compared with 15% in urban areas. Another 18% of the rural elderly population have not seen a dentist in the past 5 years, while 13% of the urban elderly have not. Health agencies in Maine stated that dental care is one of the major problems of the elderly."

This bill will help improve this situation by providing care to those in greatest need.