

Follow-up statement by Michael Dixon regarding my campaign for the office of President-Elect

I have prepared this statement to expand on my reasons for seeking the office of President-Elect.

Despite efforts by the State Legislature to maximize Maine's access to Medicaid monies to improve education, our policies and regulations, including those of the MaineCare program itself, continue to limit reimbursement. Currently, our schools are not allowed to bill MaineCare for the thousands of evaluations performed each year by Specialist-level SPs. We need the MaineCare in Education program to be fixed in a way that allows reimbursement not only for evaluations, but also for our multi-faceted skills as behavioral health providers. MaineCare should be used to bring in federal Medicaid money to address both the general shortage of SPs and other service providers, and the high need for behavioral health care. Maine should not limit the goal to simply accessing MaineCare reimbursement for IDEA services. We also must seek reimbursement for covered mental health services by SP employees and contracted service providers that are provided at no charge for non-identified students who have diagnoses. Because 65 to 70 % of total K-12 students have MaineCare coverage, what is at stake are millions of dollars of Medicaid money that can be accessed to pay for providing services to all students in need.

Some SPs are limited to mainly or entirely performing evaluations for the SAUs who employ them. Plus, they are required to do many more evaluations per year than is required in other states. Whereas the average number of SP evaluations completed yearly nation-wide is 55, in Maine, some SPs are required to perform a 100, or even more. This imposes very demanding working conditions on our SPs, which is the result of both the overall shortage of SPs in Maine, as well as the unequal distribution of SPs across the state. Some SAU's have no SPs, while others have several. This impacts not only the working conditions for SPs, but also the availability of SP services to many Maine students.

SPs are capable of doing so much more than simply completing IDEA eligibility evaluations. We want our practice to be consistent with our training in NASP's 10 Domain Model. We wish to provide services to all students in need. We want to be key players in the implementation of MTSS. We want to be available to design reading programs consistent with the science of reading. We also want to develop and carry out PBIS and other behavioral health intervention plans.

Finally, I would like to address what a vote for me means and does not mean. A vote for me stands for a concerted effort to improve the working conditions for SPs, and to make SP services more available to all Maine students. If elected, I will work tirelessly to accomplish what is necessary to make my vision of the Maine Care in Education program a reality. I cannot think of a more worthwhile way to spend my retirement than devoted to this pursuit and to achieving other MASP goals. At the same time, it is not a vote of "no confidence" in President Backman, who is doing a fine job. During my year as President-Elect and my term as President, my plan is to work closely with her and with other senior leaders of MASP and the Executive Board to increase the availability and types of SP services for the sake of Maine students.

Please email me at michaelsdixonphd@gmail.com with any questions.