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Committee approves legislation to monitor Maine dental insurers

By EDWARD D. MURPHY
Staff Writer

A bill to make sure Maine dental insurers are spending enough on improving the quality of care for their customers has cleared a legislative committee.

The bill, which would require dental insurers to report their medical loss ratios to the state annually, was passed unanimously this week by the Legislature's Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.

Under the Affordable Care Act, health insurers

are required to have an 80 percent medical loss ratio, meaning that 80 cents of every dollar is spent paying customers' claims and items that improve the quality of care.

But dental insurers don't face the same requirement, said Sen. Heather Sanborn, D-Portland, who was a chief sponsor of the measure.

Under the legislation, dental insurers would provide medical loss ratio data each year to the Maine Bureau of Insurance. The bureau would then make the data public,

calculate the average loss ratio and identify outliers. Those outlier plans would then have to submit a remediation plan to improve the value of their coverage for patients.

The bill "will give Mainers the ability to see just how much their dental plans actually spend toward improving care and patient outcomes," Sanborn said, and also give state officials the ability to make sure insurers who don't meet the standards develop plans to lower rates or improve service.

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STATE HOUSE BUREAU

Police: Driver of stolen pickup damaged fence around Eastern Prom monument

By MEGAN GRAY
Staff Writer

The fence around the obelisk on the Eastern Promenade was damaged by a person driving a stolen pickup truck, police said.

David Singer, a spokesman for the Portland Police Department, said officers noticed a 2006 Silver GMC driving at a high speed downtown around 11:30 p.m. Tuesday. They checked the truck's registration and found that it has been reported stolen. They tried to stop it, but the driver took off. The

officers did not chase the truck.

Later, dispatchers received calls about the same vehicle crashing into the monument. Singer said the truck was found on the grass on the Eastern Promenade hill, but the driver was not found. He said the investigation is ongoing.

The obelisk is made from granite from North Jay and does not appear to have been damaged. The circular fence around it was broken and blocked off by caution tape Wednesday.

Called the Cleeves and Tucker Memorial, it was the first public monument sited in Portland and was built in 1883, according to the city. It commemorates the Cleeves and Tucker families, thought to be early settlers of the area. The four sides of the obelisk are engraved with four past and present names of the city: Machigone, Casco, Falmouth and Portland.

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Ex-defense contractors deny making illegal gifts to Sen. Collins

By JENNIFER SINCO
KELLEHER
Associated Press

HONOLULU — Three former executives of a Hawaii-based defense contractor pleaded not guilty Wednesday to charges of funneling more than \$200,000 in illegal donations to aid the reelection campaign of Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine.

Former Navatek CEO Martin Kao and two others were indicted this month on charges of using company credit cards, a shell company and individual shell donors to make illegal contributions.

The indictment did not mention Collins by name and did not cite any violations by her campaign.

Her campaign has said there are no allegations of wrongdoing by the Collins for Senator campaign and the campaign had no knowledge of the allegations until a search warrant was reported in the media.

During a video hearing Wednesday before a U.S. judge in Washington, D.C., Kao, Lawrence "Kahele" Lum Kee and Clifford Chen pleaded not guilty.

The three are no longer part of the marine engineering company, which changed its name to Martin Defense Group in 2020.

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South Portland Mayor Deqa Dhalac has issued a proclamation ending the local civil state of emergency enacted in January. While the city's mask mandate is now expired, officials still recommend masking indoors regardless of vaccination status.

Derek Davis/Staff Photographer

S. Portland lifts public indoor mask mandate as state of emergency ends

By KELLEY BOUCHARD
Staff Writer

SOUTH PORTLAND — The city's public indoor mask mandate expired Wednesday after Mayor Deqa Dhalac issued a proclamation ending the local civil state of emergency enacted in January.

As a result, the mask mandate imposed by City Manager Scott Morelli on Jan. 24 was automatically repealed, he said in a written statement. The mayor declared the civil emergency because of increased

COVID-19 transmission and hospitalizations driven by the omicron variant. The City Council decided Tuesday that it should be lifted.

On a related note, Morelli also rescinded the mask mandate for municipal buildings and facilities, effective Thursday. City officials still strongly recommend masking indoors regardless of vaccination status, Morelli said. Masks will be provided in all municipal buildings for staff members and visitors who request them.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently recommends face coverings be worn in public indoor settings in counties with "substantial" or "high" levels of COVID-19 transmission. All counties in Maine currently have high transmission levels, according to the Maine CDC.

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