



Testimony before the Health and Human Services Committee

LD 1602, Resolve, Establishing the Working Group on Mental Health

Bryan Wyatt, Director of Policy & Communications, Maine Primary Care Association
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Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee—my name is Bryan Wyatt, and I serve as the Director of Policy & Communications at the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

I am sharing testimony today in support of LD 1602, Resolve Establishing the Working Group on Mental Health. On behalf of MPCA and its members, which include all of Maine’s 19 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and one FQHC Look-Alike, I encourage you to support this legislation.

As I and some of my colleagues have shared with this Committee before, Maine’s FQHCs, also known as Community Health Centers (CHCs), find themselves on the front lines of delivering mental health and substance use services in all corners of this state. In fact, the care delivery model employed at CHCs has, at its core, an integrated approach to addressing mental and behavioral health. For nearly two decades, health centers have focused on everything from depression screening and treatment to intensive outpatient treatment of substance use disorders. These services are delivered with the community needs in mind—and as such we agree that “community-based mental health services are the foundation for a healthy Maine.”

In 2017, our CHCs reported 23,223 mental and behavioral health service visits. This makes up 11% of the total visits provided at the CHCs in that same year. We suspect that the 2018 data, which comes out in August, will show an increase across the board. Furthermore, Maine’s health centers collectively serve 16% of the total Medicaid population. Given all of this, we respectfully request an amendment to this resolve to include an FQHC representative in the proposed work group. As our federal oversight agency, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), has noted, primary care settings have become a gateway to treatment for mental health and behavioral health. In addition, MPCA has already been working with many of the agencies you outline in this resolve to discuss ways that we can work together to build a stronger system of mental health care here in Maine.

We are encouraged by the work that could be done as a result of this group and are interested in the potential collaboration it offers. For these reasons, MPCA asks this Committee to support this resolve. Thank you for considering our request, and please do not hesitate to contact me at bw Wyatt@mepca.org if you have any follow-up questions.