

Presentation before the Health and Human Services Committee

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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Bryan Wyatt and I am the Director of Policy and Communications at the Maine Primary Care Association.

On behalf of Maine's Community Health Center Network, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

Maine Primary Care Association is a membership organization representing the collective voices of Maine's Community Health Centers. Our mission is to champion and maximize the value of Maine's Community Health Center Network for the health and well-being of all Maine people.

For 40 years now, MPCA has provided technical assistance and training, housed relevant programs and services, and advocated on behalf of our Health Centers and the hundreds of thousands of patients they serve each year. Maine's Community Health Centers exist in high need communities that are designated as either medically underserved areas or populations.

With 20 Health Centers and nearly 70 service sites across the state, Maine's Health Center Network spans as far north as Fort Kent, as far south as Springvale, eastward to Lubec and westward to Rangeley.

These locations serve nearly 210,000 people each year, almost 16% of Maine's total population or 1 in 6 Mainers.

Community Health Centers are unique. They provide comprehensive primary care to anyone who walks through the door, regardless of health insurance coverage or ability to pay. They are also providers of choice for those who have private insurance or Medicare; they are safety net providers for patients with MaineCare or who don't have insurance.

Maine's Community Health Centers also operate as "Health Homes." The Health Home model is like visiting your doctor's office, your dentist, care manager, nutritionist and counselor's office all rolled into one.

The range of services varies among locations, but the vast majority integrate a broad range of services into their health home model. This includes behavioral health, dental and pharmacy services, as well as supportive services that include educational, transitional and transportation services.

Maine's Health Centers put patients first. Governing Boards for our Community Health Centers are made up of no less than 51% of patients, which gives patients a greater say in the health care that is provided to the community.

Community Health Centers also are a boost to our economy. Maine's health centers employ more than 2,000 providers, clinicians, support staff and administrators, and contribute approximately \$450 million in direct health center and community spending each year.

Over the past year, Maine's health centers have been nothing short of health care super heroes, serving on the front lines of the state's pandemic response, first with critically needed testing and treatment and now, by working in collaboration with the state to ensure the vaccine needs of our rural and underserved communities are being met.

In closing, the impact of Maine's Community Health Centers is significant and wide ranging. Our Health Centers help lower overall health care costs, improve the health of patients, and generate economic opportunities in communities served by providing jobs and training for local people.

Maine Primary Care Association and our Community Health Center Network supports responsible health policy that promotes greater access to affordable health care for all Maine people, and we look forward to working with you to achieve this important goal.

Thank you.