

State of Maine
130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Bryan Wyatt, MA, on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
April 6, 2021
Supporting:

LD 979, "An Act to Expand Maine's School-based Health Centers"

Sponsored by Representative Sachs

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Bryan Wyatt and I am the Director of Policy and Communications at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership organization that includes all of Maine's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs).

Maine Primary Care Association supports LD 979 and thanks Rep. Sachs and the other sponsors for bringing this bill forward in the 130th Legislature.

School-based health centers (SBHCs) were started in the 1960s to increase access to health care for marginalized and vulnerable populations. A lot has changed since then but thankfully the mission of SBHCs to expand access to health care and preventive health care services has remained the same.

Three of Maine's Community Health Centers—Community Clinical Services (CCS), Greater Portland Health (GPH) and Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC)—operate the majority of the state's SBHC sites. These SBHCs play a critical role in removing barriers to health care services and meeting the needs of disadvantaged student populations across the state.

Our SBHCs are staffed by an array of medical professionals, including nurses and doctors, and provide a range of services—covering everything from basic care and check ups to mental health care. For many in Maine, SBHCs are the only means by which students might have access to health care.

In addition to health benefits there are academic benefits of SBHCs as well. According to *Nemours KidsHealth*, SBHCs also help students do better in school, boost graduation rates and reduce school discipline cases¹.

While we support passage of LD 979, we do also want to note that we have heard from several of our health center members, who have received funding from the state's SBHC program in

¹ <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/school-based-health.html>

the past, are currently receiving funding, or are planning to begin providing school-based services but are uncertain about seeking state funding, that the reporting requirements tied to state support are particularly onerous. Thus, lack of sufficient funding may not be the only impediment to more widespread participation by health centers in the program.

Therefore, we respectfully ask you to consider that the objective of this bill – to expand school-based health centers – would be well served by accompanying increased funding with adjustments to the reporting requirements to make the SBHC program more conducive to health center participation. Please know that we would welcome the opportunity to work with you on this further during work session and/or with the drafting of a proposed amendment.

In closing, we support LD 979 and urge the Committee to report it favorably, but we also welcome an opportunity to work with you and the Department to ameliorate unduly burdensome reporting while continuing to gather important information to monitor the success of these centers.

Thank you for considering our testimony, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly at bwyatt@mepca.org if you have follow up questions or we may work with you to improve the final version of the bill.

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