

**State of Maine
130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services**

**Testimony of Charles F. Dingman
On behalf of the Maine Primary Care Association**

Supporting

LD 749, " An Act To Establish a Council on Health Systems Development "

Sponsored by Representative Anne Perry

April 21, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Charlie Dingman, a lawyer with the firm of Kozak & Gayer, and I am here today on behalf of the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership association that includes all of Maine's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs).

Maine's CHCs provide comprehensive primary and preventive care for approximately 1 in 6 Maine people. Community Health Centers make up the largest primary care network in the state, and they provide high quality, wide-ranging health care services. They are at the forefront of delivering care to underserved communities in our State, without regard to patients' ability to pay.

The Maine Primary Care Association supports LD 749 and thanks Representative Perry and the other sponsors for proposing this measure. The sponsor's amendment to the original concept draft recognizes and takes important steps to build a foundation of comprehensive, current, accurate information for the development of strong public policies supporting a robust yet cost-effective health care system in our state.

MPCA notes similarities between the objectives of this bill and President Jackson's LD 120, which proposes to create a nonpartisan Legislative Office of Affordable Health Care and an Advisory Council to work with it. MPCA also supported that measure, noting the value of continuity in the development and interpretation of information to support health care policymaking. Both bills emphasize data collection and sustained study of cost drivers, but the bills take different approaches to the staffing of the councils charged with considering these matters, and there are some differences in composition of the councils as well. MPCA assumes and hopes that this Committee will consider the strong points of each bill and recommend a single measure to address these information gathering and policy development objectives. MPCA welcomes the opportunity to participate with other stakeholders in the Committee's consideration of how to fashion a statute that combines the best of these two bills.

As the Committee addresses LD 749 and related measures, we ask that you consider including two additional perspectives within the health care community in the composition of the

proposed Council. While various health care provider types are specifically provided a “seat at the table” in the current draft of LD 749, two important ones are missing. As noted above, Maine’s CHCs constitute the largest network of primary care providers in the State. They also have a uniquely long history in delivering integrated, comprehensive care to patients in underserved communities. As such, their perspective must not be overlooked in assembling a Council to examine health system development and cost drivers.

Likewise, CHCs, which often include dental practices, recognize the crucial role of oral health in the overall health and well-being of the people they serve. Dental practices and dental coverage are often treated separately from other components of health care, but as an essential part of cost-effective health care, they should not be considered in isolation. Consequently, a representative of dental practices should also be included on the Council. Both positions could be added by revising subparagraph 1(A)(1) under Section 1 to provide 3 instead of 2 persons with expertise in health care delivery and providing that one would represent hospitals, one federally qualified health centers, and one dental practices. Based on a conversation with Representative Perry, we understand that she supports both of these additions.

Thank you for your time during the hearing and for your attention to this somewhat more detailed written testimony. I would be pleased to respond to any questions via the contact information provided below.

Charles F. Dingman, Esq.
cdingman@kozakgayer.com
Mobile: (207)-240-9146

Kozak & Gayer, P.A.
157 Capitol Street, Ste. 1
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 621-4390