

State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
March 28, 2023

Supporting:
LD 199, “An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions to the MaineCare Program”

Sponsored by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, Policy and Communications Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

MPCA is a membership organization that includes all of Maine's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality and equitable primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 70 service delivery sites in all 16 Maine counties.

We strongly support LD 199 and thank Speaker Talbot Ross for bringing legislation forward that will ensure all Maine residents with low income have access to MaineCare, regardless of immigration status. Members of our communities deserve full health insurance provided by the MaineCare program.

Community Health Centers were born out of the Civil Rights Movement and a need to provide access points to health and social services for medically under-served and disenfranchised populations. We are deeply committed to continuing that mission of promoting greater health equity for all people. Today, CHCs in Maine are on the frontlines of providing health care to some of our most vulnerable and neglected populations.

Community Health Centers are required to provide this care *without regard to a patient's insurance status or ability to pay* – which is a mandate unlike any other primary care provider. Ensuring that the patients they serve have access to MaineCare coverage allows our primary care providers to fully utilize the wraparound services that are necessary for the overall health of the whole person. Being able to bill for these services is critical for the financial health of the health centers as well, as they continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and are dealing with inflationary wage pressures and increasing costs of care. Without reimbursement for these visits, it is becoming increasingly harder for health centers to keep their doors open and uphold their mandate and commitment to provide high quality and equitable care for their communities.

On behalf of Maine's Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hhudson@mepca.org with any follow up questions.

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