

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
April 20, 2023

Supporting:
LD 1522, “An Act to Provide Economic Justice to Historically Disadvantaged Older Citizens by Amending the Laws Governing the Medicare Savings Program”

Sponsored by Representative Fay

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.

MPCA supports LD 1522 and thanks Representative Fay and the other co-sponsors for bringing forward this important legislation that seeks economic justice for older Mainers. Now more than ever, CHCs are being called on to meet the diverse and growing needs of vulnerable populations. CHCs' ability to address a wide range of primary care issues, from dental to behavioral health, while also understanding and responding to Social Drivers of Health (SDOH), makes them a crucial part of the nation's healthcare infrastructure and a leader in efforts to address inequities in health care delivery. Given this role, we understand the value of and need for this legislation.

Expanding access to the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) would provide economic justice for older people with lower incomes by helping to pay for some or all of their Medicare premiums, deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance. MSP pays for the Part B premium, which is usually taken from social security, so this means the program puts more money back into the pockets of older Mainers. LD 1522 would tie eligibility for the MSP Program to the Elder Economic Security Index (EESI), which indicates how much income an older person needs in Maine to meet their basic needs, instead of the Federal Poverty Limit, which is tied solely to the cost of food.

Furthermore, LD 1522 would help lift historically marginalized older people out of poverty by increasing access to eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program and would make MSP available to tens of thousands of lower income older Mainers who do not currently qualify for the program, making it possible for them to meet their basic needs with the income they have.

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

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