

State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Taxation
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
May 4, 2023

Supporting:
LD 1544, “An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit”

Sponsored by Representative Terry

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, I am Hannah Hudson, Policy and Communications Manager at the 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 support LD 1544 and thank Representative Terry and the cosponsors for bringing this bill forward. The federal Child Tax Credit was transformative for Maine families, and we encourage the Committee to build on the success of this policy. This bill would improve our state's dependent exemption tax credit by fixing a flaw in the credit's design, which leaves out families with low income who need it most, and increasing the credit from \$300 to \$350. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, these changes would reduce child poverty in our state by 12.3%, moving 3,500 Maine kids out of poverty.

Every day, staff at Community Health Centers utilize a “whole person” approach to providing primary care services, from preventative medicine to dental care to behavioral health. This care-team model allows them to also understand and respond to patient needs that come from inequities in the Social Drivers of Health (SDOH). Being able to live in safe neighborhoods, achieve economic stability, and have access to food and transportation are examples of SDOH that can have wide-ranging effects on the health and survival of their patients. CHC providers see first-hand the stress that inflation, rising energy costs, housing and childcare can put on family budgets.

LD 1544 provides an opportunity to address inequities in SDOH and invest in families with low income. Expanding the child tax credit will help kids throughout their whole lives, supporting higher educational attainment, better health, and higher earnings as adults. This is a targeted policy to help Maine families build economic security that will make a positive difference for kids and, in the end, benefit us all.

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.

Hannah Hudson, MA
Policy and Communications Manager
Maine Primary Care Association