

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  
February 1, 2024

**Supporting:**  
**LD 1877, “An Act to Reduce the Number of Children Living in Deep Poverty by Adjusting Assistance for Low-income Families”**

Sponsored by Representative Meyer

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, Director of Policy at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership organization representing Maine's 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 80 service delivery sites around the State.

CHCs are at the forefront of delivering care to rural and underserved Maine communities. They provide all patients with comprehensive primary care services, as well as a host of other services that include transportation, translation, and case management services, among others. They are further required to provide this care without regard to a patient's insurance status or ability to pay.

We are supportive of LD 1877 and thank Representative Meyer for bringing this legislation forward. By increasing grant amounts and allowing more families with very low incomes to access TANF support, LD 1877 can significantly reduce child poverty.

Every day, staff at Community Health Centers utilize a “whole person” approach to providing primary care services, from preventive 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.

Modernizing Maine's TANF program, bringing it in line with other states' approaches and current economic conditions, will ensure families have opportunities to meet their needs (including access to healthcare), strengthen our communities, and support our state's workforce goals. It would also create a more streamlined process for DHHS to verify eligibility for support services, reducing administrative burdens and delays and maximizing accuracy.

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](mailto:hudson@mepca.org) with any follow up questions.

Hannah Hudson, MA  
Director of Policy  
Maine Primary Care Association  
[hudson@mepca.org](mailto:hudson@mepca.org)