

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
Testimony of Hannah Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
February 4th, 2025

Supporting:

LD 239, “An Act to Allow Retail Pharmacies to Operate Remote Dispensing Sites in Rural Areas”
Sponsored by Senator Brad Farrin

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial 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 affordable, high quality 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.

Mainers face a critical shortage of pharmacy access, especially in the rural and underserved areas served by FQHCs. In recent years, FQHCs have faced increasing difficulty ensuring that their patients have access to pharmacy services. Throughout the state, FQHCs are seeing a dramatic decline in the number of retail pharmacies, and a reduction of hours for those still in operation, due to ongoing workforce and economic challenges. In Maine, 45% of the population is living in a pharmacy desert.^{1 2}

Maine has reached a crisis point in its ability to provide patients with access to affordable, lifesaving medications. MPCA is supportive of this legislation as each FQHC should be able to find a solution that works best for their community when it comes to delivering necessary services, including partnerships with retail pharmacies to establish remote dispensing sites.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any follow up questions.

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¹ <https://www.goodrx.com/healthcare-access/research/many-americans-lack-convenient-access-to-pharmacies>

² A rural pharmacy desert is defined as any area within a 10-mile radius without ready access to a pharmacy (for those that have access to transportation). An urban pharmacy desert is defined as a low-income community or neighborhood with no pharmacy within a half-mile for those with limited vehicle access. For low-income communities with adequate vehicle access, the defining radius extends to a mile.