

Testimony of Lisa Tapert, Executive Director of the Maine Mobile Health Program

In Opposition to the Department of Health and Human Services' Proposed Section 1115 Demonstration Waiver, MaineCare Reform

Thursday, May 18, 2017

My name is Lisa Tapert, I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Mobile Health Program in opposition to the proposed 1115 Medicaid waiver request that the Department of Health and Human Services intends to submit to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

For the past 25 years, MMHP has provided health services to seasonal workers throughout the state of Maine. These include the workers that process seafood, rake blueberries, plant and pick potatoes and broccoli, pick apples and plant and pick Christmas trees. These workers are the backbone of Maine's agriculture industry and are working in one of the three most dangerous professions in the country.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we bring medical, dental and behavioral health services to Maine's workers through mobile RVs and by connecting clients to local health centers. Because we offer both direct medical care and coordinate patient care at other health facilities, we have a unique understanding how changes to Medicaid eligibility affect a health center's ability to operate and the direct impact on patient's access to care. We are a safety net provider, and we depend on our health partners as part of that same safety net.

As an FQHC, changes to Medicaid eligibility which reduce the number of individuals enrolled in coverage affect our delicate balance of funding. Our federal funding ensures that anyone who needs primary and preventive care services receives them. But we also need Medicaid reimbursement in some cases to complement that federal funding, and to cover services for patients who we refer to local health centers and hospitals. We and our partners would feel the effect of these changes on our operations.

We also understand how the proposed restrictions will impact individual access to health care. We employ a large team of Community Health Workers (CHW) as a cost-effective way to improve health for patients facing multiple barriers to care. Our CHWs provide a broad range of support to clients including care navigation, transportation, translation, and health insurance enrollment assistance. Because we help patients with each step of accessing health services, from setting an appointment all the way to help at the pharmacy and through the billing and payment process, we interact frequently with MaineCare services and providers accepting MaineCare clients.

Although only 3.9% of our patients were on Medicaid in 2016, those that were, truly needed those services. You will hear or have already heard the Maine Primary Care Association describe the way elimination of retroactive coverage and charging for appointments is a burden for health center patients. MMHP believes the proposed changes to MaineCare would have a significant impact on access to care for some of the most vulnerable populations in the state. Our patients are hard workers who sometimes need safety net programs to live healthy productive lives and contribute to Maine's economy. They would acutely feel the impact of these changes. We strongly urge the Department of Health and Human Services not to submit the 1115 waiver as proposed.