



**Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee  
on Health and Human Services  
LD 1710, *An Act To Restore Maine's School-based Health Centers*  
Darcy Shargo, CEO, Maine Primary Care Association  
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Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee; I am Darcy Shargo, and I serve as CEO of the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

I am testifying today in support of LD 1710, ***An Act To Restore Maine's School-based Health Centers*** on behalf of the Maine Primary Care Association, and its members, which include all of Maine's 19 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and one FQHC Look-Alike. Maine's FQHCs provide comprehensive primary and preventive care for approximately 1 in 6 Maine people. Three of Maine's FQHCs—Greater Portland Health, Community Clinical Services, and Penobscot Community Health Care—together run the vast majority of the 15 state-funded school based health center sites. The other SBHCs that get state funding serve largely rural areas across Maine.

LD 1710 seeks to restore funding to Maine's school-based health centers (SBHCs) to the level of funding provided in fiscal year 2016 - 2017. We support this re-enstatement of funding given the critical access points that SBHCs provide to students in areas as far-flung as Calais to South Portland. SBHCs offer a powerful tool for improving access to health care for children and adolescents who experience disparities in outcomes simply because of their race, ethnicity, or family incomes. When integrated services such as medical, behavioral, dental, and vision care are placed in schools, alongside robust prevention programs that help to address tobacco and other substance use, it is more likely that young people have equal opportunity to learn and grow. In a state like Maine, where childhood poverty and persistent food insecurity make educational attainment

more of a challenge, we should continue to invest in programs that reduce barriers to getting preventive and primary health care services.

Furthermore, as you will no doubt hear from many others today, research demonstrates that the SBHC model is ideal to address the “changing landscape of the health care system,” and it is especially responsive “to the unique physical and mental health needs of children and adolescents in an accessible environment.”<sup>i</sup> In addition, the SBHCs tend to be drivers of collaboration in their communities, bringing together parents, educators, health care providers and students to address a variety of important health-related issues.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not urge you to consider the SBHC’s funding and long term viability within the broader context of state investments in public health infrastructure. Such a re-instatement of funds should not require that other important public health priorities suffer. Rather, this is a critical time to ramp up investments in public health priorities, given the significant public health crises in Maine.

I urge you to support LD 1710. I sincerely appreciate your consideration and I would be pleased to respond to any questions. Thank you.

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3770486/>