



LD 718 An Act To Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children's Health Insurance Program

Testimony in Support

April 15, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN, I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 12,000 employees statewide.

While there are many noncitizens residents of Maine that are in need of health insurance, I will focus on one patient story to exemplify the importance of this bill.

After living in the United States for over a decade as a legal resident asylum seeker, in July of 2020 a patient was admitted to a Northern Light Health hospital, in need of acute hospital care. The patient's health care conditions were successfully treated, and the doctors and nurses identified that the patient lacked decision making capacity to consent to transfer to a nursing facility. This patient needs ongoing 24-hour nursing care. As an immigrant the patient was also uninsured which is a primary barrier to discharging the patient to a nursing facility. The hospital care managers have taken all of the right steps to support the health care needs of this patient. Today the patient has a legal guardian that has consented to the need for nursing facility care and is actively working with us to find financial resources to support the care. Local and State health services have been contacted for support and we are also working with staff from our Congressional delegation to find resources to pay for the nursing facility care this patient needs.

This patient has lived and worked in this country on a legal basis for a significant period of time, including working for part of what is now the Northern Light System at one point. Now, lacking capacity, he can do nothing to help himself gain citizenship or a payment source for continued care, his public guardian has not been able to obtain MaineCare coverage for him due to this immigration status, and even with the assistance of legal immigration counsel paid for by the State his prospects of obtaining citizenship are dismal. Because of his inability to care for himself, Northern Light Health is prohibited from discharging the patient because of legal, regulatory and ethical concerns, given that he has no appropriate placement to be discharged to without a payor source. This situation where the obstacle to discharge is the lack of payor source shows no sign of changing despite the best efforts of all involved, thus he must remain at the hospital indefinitely, even though he is doing well physically and does not need

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Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

hospital care. Although he lacks capacity, the circumstance of being confined to the hospital is understandably harmful to the patient's mental health and general well-being.

Unfortunately, this patient has lived in our hospital for 9 months waiting for discharge to a nursing facility. There is no foreseeable discharge date at this point and that is certainly not for a lack of effort to find a financial resource to pay for this patient's nursing facility care.

This bill is the solution for this patient and more in need of health insurance to pay for the care they need. I ask for your support in considering this important legislation.

Thank you.