



**State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
Testimony of Ann Tucker on behalf of Greater Portland Health
February 29, 2024**

Supporting:

LD 2175, “An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas”

Sponsored by President Jackson

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, I am, Ann Tucker, CEO of Greater Portland Health. Greater Portland Health is one of Maine’s 19 community health centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and part of the largest independent primary care network in the state.

Greater Portland Health (GPH), a non-profit, Federally Qualified Health Center founded in 2009 is committed to offering everyone in our communities high-quality, affordable, accessible, and culturally sensitive care. GPH cares for over 16,000 community members across 16 locations in Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook in our state’s most diverse neighborhoods. Our range of care includes primary care, mental health, substance use, recuperative care, and oral health.

We strongly support LD 2175 and thank President Jackson and the cosponsors for bringing legislation forward that will provide much needed support for FQHCs to improve access and expand pharmacy services in Maine.

Mainers are facing a critical shortage of access to affordable medications, especially in rural and underserved areas served by Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). 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. FQHCs want to be able to provide pharmacy services to the communities that they serve, yet existing health center revenues and resources are insufficient to support such development or expansion of current services. FQHCs are also facing conflicting and burdensome requirements from drug manufacturers that are restricting where a health center can distribute affordable drugs under the 340B Federal Drug Pricing Program, depriving many patients of access to necessary, lifesaving medications.

LD 2175 would establish a grant program, overseen by the Office of Affordable Health Care, to provide support for FQHCs to develop or expand their capacity to provide greater access to affordably priced drugs for their patients by increasing FQHCs’ ability to deliver pharmacy services to those patients.

Our patients face a myriad of obstacles each day including picking up prescriptions due to pharmacy hours, transportation, under or uninsured and the high cost of drugs. We would utilize this funding to be able to expand pharmacy access in the greater Portland area. GPH would like to be able to have an onsite pharmacy.

On behalf of Greater Portland Health, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at atucker@greaterportlandhealth.org with any follow up questions.

Sincerely,

Ann Tucker

Ann Tucker, CEO