

April 10, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of No. 1161 “An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics”

Dear Representative Brennan, Representative Arford, Representative Collings, Representative Craven, Representative Gramlich, Representative Meyer, Representative Murphy, Representative Perry, Representative Worth and Senator Ingwersen and members of the Joint Standing Committee of Health and Human Services:

My name is Sarah Patton and I am a physician assistant where I work as a volunteer medical provider at Oasis Free Clinics in Brunswick. I am writing in support of LD 1161, “An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics”. Oasis Health Clinics is truly a safety net for Mainers who do not have health or dental insurance. The patients of Oasis Health Clinics are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and live in Freeport, Durham, Brunswick, Harpswell and Sagadahoc County. The care provided by Oasis Health Clinics allows Mainers to receive comprehensive compassionate primary care, dental care and prescription assistance services. Without the provision of services from Oasis Health Clinics, the majority of these patients would be without any medical care for their chronic and acute medical and dental conditions. Without this care, these patient’s conditions would undoubtedly worsen and result in increased morbidity and mortality. This would also result in increased acute visits to the emergency room and hospitals in our state, which are already over-burdened, understaffed and ill equipped to provide the comprehensive care needed of these patients.

There is a shortage of dentists in 15/16 counties in the state of Maine according to the Pew Charitable Trust. In addition, the Urban Institute estimates that Maine could see a loss of 89,000 or 22.5% of the MaineCare and CHIP population during the re-determination process between April 2023 and June 2024. This will only increase the number of patients seeking care from Oasis Health Clinics and other free health services throughout the state of Maine. Furthermore, Oasis Health Clinics has been at the front lines of providing care to the population of asylum seekers who have made Maine their new home. For all of these reasons, I urge your support in funding of free health clinics in the state of Maine.

I have worked the last two years as a professor at UNE helping train the next generation of PAs who will be providing care for a good percentage of Mainers for decades to come. While we strive to teach these future healthcare workers how to problem-solve the challenges of providing care to rural underserved populations, we ask for your help to solve the funding deficit for these free healthcare services. Please help our community of healthcare providers achieve our goal of providing comprehensive, compassionate care to Mainers, including our under and uninsured Mainers.

Thank you for your time,
Sarah B. W. Patton, MSHS, PA-C
Assistant Clinical Professor UNE PA Program/WCHP



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Sarah Patton
Freeport, Maine
LD 1161

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