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## Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 1161 An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership and we support LD 1161 An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics.

The population the ten Community Action Agencies across the state serves is primarily low-income Mainers. Many are MaineCare members, some have health plans through the Affordable Care Act or their jobs, but too many Mainers still fall through the cracks.

As you likely know, not many stand-alone free clinics still exist in Maine. In my area, Oasis Free Clinic in Brunswick serves a 450 patient panel, including medical, dental and a small number of social work or case management patients. With modest funding, which \$250,000 certainly is, they could expand their dental and mental health capacity in a way that benefits both the patients and the community in a very cost-effective way.

A few years ago, the City of Portland decided to close its free clinic, but community outcry led to a group of providers and community members to keep it open. Even in a city with two major hospital systems, a Federally Qualified Health Center and many primary care providers, this service is needed.

Federally Qualified Health Centers are an excellent alternative and are throughout the state, but they are reimbursed for services in a manner that includes uninsured, so their business model works differently. Hospital systems also offer limited free care as a required community service, but too often require patients to ask for it, apply for it and jump through unnecessary hoops to receive it.

We support all these models; moreover, we support a more equitable healthcare system that ensures all Mainers have access to quality, affordable healthcare in a meaningful, geographically and culturally appropriate way. Until such time, the few remaining free clinics need our support, so they can support Maine families.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

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