

Annee Tara  
Brunswick  
LD 1161

Testimony in Support of LD 1161: An Act to Fund the State's Free Health Clinics  
April 14, 2023

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Annee Tara and I am writing in support of LD 1161: An Act to Fund the State's Free Health Clinics. I live in Brunswick and am honored to be a volunteer at Oasis Free Clinics which offers free medical, dental and prescription services to nearly 500 of our neighbors in Durham and eastern Cumberland and Sagadahoc Counties. As I tell our incoming patients: I am not a health care provider; I am a volunteer whose job is to learn some things about potential clients and to tell them some things about our Clinics.

The most straight-forward part of what I do is to make sure the new patient lives in our catchment area and does, indeed, have a low income. Beyond that, what I learn about these folks is that they have mostly not seen a doctor or a dentist in many years, except maybe in the emergency room or a walk-in clinic. Too often, they are in crisis – dealing with health, financial, social issues that would drive most of us to despair. They put one foot after the other and deal with these things with grace and patience that astound me. I am so glad we can offer some assistance with the most pressing of their needs.

What is amazing about Oasis is that most of our providers are health care professionals; they come in on their "time off" to treat Oasis patients because they believe everyone should have health care – even if they don't have money or insurance. Just knowing that has quite an impact on these new patients – they don't feel valued in this way very often.

What is even more amazing is that we serve these people, as well as asylum-seekers have who have come to the mid-Coast, even as they haven't yet found housing and while they are waiting to apply for a work permit. Each year, Oasis is able to provide about \$2 million dollars in care to these most vulnerable of our neighbors.

Your approval of LD 1161 will make it possible for Oasis, and its counterparts to do their jobs better and faster. On behalf of our patients and our communities, I ask for your support.