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• **SUPPORT** Maine Physicians • **ADVANCE** the quality of medicine in Maine • **PROMOTE** the health all Maine people

TO: Joint Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Anna Boucher, Legal Extern

DATE: April 14, 2023

SUPPORT – [LD 1161](#), An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and the distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Anna Boucher, Legal Extern for the Maine Medical Association and I live in Jefferson. The MMA appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments in support of LD 1161 which would provide one-time funding of \$250,000 for the State's free health clinics.

The Maine Medical Association is Maine's largest professional association representing over 4,300 current and future physicians from all specialties in all practice settings.

The MMA's core priorities include protecting, supporting, and advancing the access to and quality of health care for all Maine people. Along with these goals, the MMA has made physician voluntary work a [primary focus](#). Physicians volunteer at ten free health clinics across the state: Ellsworth Free Medical Clinic, Free Clinic L/A at Trinity Jubilee Center, Hope House Free Women's Health Clinic, Knox County Health Clinic, Leavitt's Mill Health Center, Maine Migrant Health Program, Oasis Free Clinic, Peninsula Free Health Services, Portland Community Free Clinic, and The Root Cellar.

[Free health clinics](#) are considered health care community "safety nets" that are operated for the purpose of providing primary health care to socio-economically and geographically underserved patient populations. These clinics provide medical, dental, pharmacy, vision, and/or behavioral health services to individuals who would otherwise be unable to afford such services.

Free health clinics are an indispensable resource for the State in helping to bridge health care coverage gaps for Mainers who have an income too high to qualify for Medicaid, but cannot afford medical insurance, or who are homeless. Without these clinics, Maine's uninsured population will not have access to preventive medical care and will experience negative health outcomes and [higher healthcare costs](#). Today, [most uninsured patients report](#) that they would either not seek medical care or would use the emergency department if free clinics were not available. Therefore, free health clinics are a vital asset to our State in their ability to provide competent medical care while lessening burdens on emergency departments.

The Maine Medical Association is a statewide volunteer organization formed in 1853, serving more than 4,300 current and future Maine physicians in all clinical specialties, organizations, and practice settings.

Protecting access for all to quality medical care by funding Maine's free health clinics is essential to ensuring public health and improving health outcomes statewide. With these things in mind, we urge an "ought to pass" vote on LD 1161 in order to continue our mission of caring for Maine people.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue. We are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

Anna Boucher

anna.z.boucher@maine.edu