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April 14, 2023

Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1161 - *An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics*

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter is to provide information about LD 1161, *An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics*, and the potential impact of the proposed legislation, if enacted.

LD 1161 provides one-time funding for the State's free health clinics. The bill requires funding to be distributed based on a formula adopted by the Department utilizing the number of clients served and a base amount for each clinic.

The State's free health clinics offer healthcare services including physician exams, basic lab testing and x-rays, routine health care, dental services, assistance programs, and social services to eligible individuals statewide. Collectively, these free clinics serve hundreds of individuals each year who may not have access to quality care and do not qualify for health insurance, largely through grant and donor funds and a volunteer workforce. The Maine CDC values the services of free clinics in Maine and underscores the importance of supporting these clinics as a cost-effective way of providing accessible quality healthcare and non-emergent services to Mainers who are uninsured or underinsured.

As written, LD 1161 provides one-time funding appropriated to the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) within the Department, though, currently, the Maine CDC is working to allocate limited funds to free health clinics identified across the State to support medical and dental services provided to Maine's uninsured and underinsured population in response to similar legislation passed in 2021 ([Public Law 2021, chapter 548](#), introduced as LD 47 and enacted by the 130th Maine State Legislature, as amended). A change to the financial account specified in the bill from OCFS (0228) to Maine CDC would eliminate the need to redirect funds to the Maine CDC that causes delay in the distribution of funds. Additionally, further clarity of the expected use of funds and apportionment is needed to ensure the distribution is as intended.

In summary, the Maine CDC respectfully recommends that, if enacted, LD 1161 be amended to identify a clear methodology for the use of funds that includes specific criteria for identifying eligible recipients and scope of services, and further amended to direct the funding through the

Maine CDC for apportionments. Five clinics are known to be currently operating to provide a range of healthcare services at no cost to low-income uninsured or underinsured Mainers and identified to receive the limited funds made available by PL 2021, Ch. 548. Given the general fund impact, the Department opposes this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. The Maine CDC is available to provide additional details for the Committee's consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Beardsley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Beardsley, Acting Director
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention