



# Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Advocating the right to quality, affordable  
health care for all Mainers.

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## Testimony In Support of:

### LD 1161, An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics

April 14, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in support of LD 1161, An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics.

My name is Kate Ende and I am the policy director at Consumers for Affordable Health Care, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable health care for every person in Maine. As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program (CAP), which operates a toll-free HelpLine. Our HelpLine fields approximately 6,000 calls and emails every year from people across Maine who need help obtaining, keeping, using, or fixing problems with private health insurance or with accessing or affording health care services. CAHC also serves as the Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and helps people apply for and navigate the MaineCare enrollment process.

This bill provides a modest level of funding to support free health clinics in Maine. Through our HelpLine, we frequently hear from people with low-incomes or who are uninsured and are in need of health care, including primary care services, chronic disease management, oral health care, and prescription drugs to treat an illness or health condition. In these instances, we often refer people to a free health clinic if there is one available in their area.

Cost is a barrier to care for many people.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we will be releasing data soon from a recent survey that shows more than one in three Mainers delayed or skipped going to the doctor when they were sick due to costs in the past two years. Free health clinics remove cost as a barrier for people who may otherwise delay or skip needed medical or dental services. These clinics provide incredibly valuable services and often help prevent more serious illnesses that would likely otherwise require more expensive treatment or care in a more expensive setting, such as a hospital emergency department. For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 1161.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/americans-challenges-with-health-care-costs/>