

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Office of MaineCare Services
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-2674; Fax (207) 287-2675
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

May 3, 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 361 – *An Act to Increase the Reimbursement for Electronic Consultations Through Medicaid*

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information and share our opposition to LD 361, *An Act to Increase the Reimbursement for Electronic Consultations Through Medicaid*.

Payments for electronic consultations (e-consults) are presently covered by MaineCare under Section 4, *Telehealth Services*, and reimbursed at 72.4% of current year Medicare rates, consistent with MaineCare methodology used for payment for services across numerous sections of the MaineCare Benefits Manual.

The Department supports the concept and expansion of eConsults but opposes this bill as it appears to introduce changes to current MaineCare rate reimbursement methodology at a time when rate reform is underway, undermining the rate reform process and principles established last year in P.L. 2021, ch 639, which was passed in the last legislature as LD 1867, *An Act to Codify MaineCare Rate System Reform*. The intent behind that bill was to establish "... a rate-setting system for the development and maintenance of MaineCare payment models ... to be consistent with efficiency, economy, and quality of care; that are adequate to support MaineCare member access to services; and that are equitable and data-driven."

We would also note that providers participating in e-consult programs have often cited that while Medicare and MaineCare provide payment for e-consults, commercial health plans have not consistently participated in paying for e-consults.

Additionally, we wanted to note related Department efforts to promote e-consults. In June 2021, the Department was awarded a \$32 million grant to be used toward addressing disparities in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and advancing health equity. A portion of those funds was used to establish a one-year pilot program to implement the "Maine eConsult Network,"¹ a system to support e-consults between primary care providers and specialists using an established specialty network and a web-based system that allows secure sharing of health information

¹ <https://www.econsultmaine.org/>

between the parties. With Department funding, the Maine eConsult Network is currently working with nine primary care provider organizations to set up systems for specialty consultation using e-consults in an effort to promote and ultimately extend this network to other primary care practices across the state.

We wanted you to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Probert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Probert".

Michelle Probert
Director
MaineCare Services