

Emily Carpenter
Sullivan, ME
LD 1955

Dear members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Emily Carpenter. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, employed full time in the Behavioral Health department of one of Maine's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

I am writing today in support of LD 1955, "An Act to Require Hospitals and Hospital-affiliated Providers to Provide Financial Assistance for Medical Care."

The purpose of Federally Qualified Health Centers like the one where I work is to provide primary care for all residents of the state regardless of their insurance coverage. Many patients I see are uninsured despite their best attempts to enroll in insurance. In two cases I have seen since 2021, patients who were rejected from MaineCare because their income was slightly too high (in one case, by several hundred dollars; in another case, by twenty-five dollars) became saddled with enormous medical debt from emergency hospitalizations, even after existing financial assistance.

Working in any level of rural health care - clinic or hospital, as a provider or as an administrator- is extremely challenging. I understand there is a struggle to maintain revenue and pay the bills. But saddling patients with enormous bills they literally cannot afford to pay, and then selling that debt to collections agencies for pennies on the dollar, is lose-lose for hospitals and patients alike. This bill proposes a better alternative that supports Maine residents and will support Maine communities.

Thank you.

Emily Carpenter, LCSW
Sullivan, Hancock County, ME