

Michael Eckardt
Maine Hospice Council
LD 2214

I am submitting testimony to you as a Board member of the Maine Hospice Council and Center for End-of-Life Care. The ME Hospice Council (MHC) began in 1984 and is a non-profit 501(c)(3). It is currently funded by \$43,000 from the State General Fund and must therefore rely on grants and donations to fund its 1.5 FTEs.

Since its inception, there has been no increase in the State's contribution, which has never been adjusted for inflation. Representative Margaret Craven proposed an increase of \$84,000, which would adjust for inflation; this proposal was recommended unanimously by the Health and Human Services Committee. Unfortunately, despite assurances by appropriators, it was not included in the budget and is not in the supplemental. This creates a financial disaster, resulting in the founding and current Executive Director (Kandyce Powell) going without a salary and places this organization in extreme jeopardy.

Some of the current initiatives that are being worked on by the MHC are:

- Next Generation task force to address Palliative Care (PC)/Hospice work force retention;
- Listening sessions in the rural areas to collect information about access to hospice and PC;
- Maine State PC Coalition; helping to pass MaineCare funding for PC;
- Education for ME providers to ensure end-of-life care choices - Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Care (POLST);
- Island initiative to help those communities to learn how to care for their own as there is no access to service.

I would appreciate your support in whatever you can do to attain the necessary funding. Thank you in advance for your efforts in correcting an oversight and enabling this critical health-related organization to survive. My views are, in part, shaped from having spent 25 years at the National Institutes of Health conducting research and participating in recommending national health policies.

Michael J. Eckardt, PhD
Emeritus Vice President for Research
University of Maine