

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
January 23, 2025

Opposing

LD 209, “An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025”

Sponsored by Representative Gattine

Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, and Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Ellen Krajewski, CEO of Eastport Health Care (EHC), a community health center with locations in Eastport and Machias. I am writing to express my concern about the lack of pharmacy access in Downeast Maine and my concern about the decision to remove funding for an FQHC pharmacy access program from the budget.

Our patients need increased pharmacy access. In Eastport, for example, the median age of patients is 63.5. Many of these older adults live at or below 200% FPL and do not have a car. They walk to the pharmacy next to EHC and do not have transportation to Calais (30 min.) or Machias (55 min.). The EHC staff team continues to face several issues when trying to ensure that patients are about the access medications:

- Pharmacies located near our service sites have inconsistent hours.
- Some pharmacies do not accept Medicare Advantage plans, will not enter a 340B contract pharmacy arrangement with EHC, or do not implement a sliding fee scale - all things that make it harder for patients to easily access affordable medications. This leads to patients having to travel to pharmacies that are farther away or utilize mail order pharmacies (which have restrictions on what can be shipped).
- Our team has also had trouble ensuring refills are available for patients. As an example, we had to give out samples of insulin at one point as the medication was not in stock at the pharmacy.

EHC was planning to apply for the pharmacy funds for an in-house pharmacy to alleviate many of the issues that our patients face daily and ensure that medications remain accessible for our community members. I urge you to re-appropriate the one-time funding approved in Public Law 2023, chapter 643 for developing and expanding pharmacy services and access to affordable priced prescription drugs for patients of community health centers.

Sincerely,

Ellen

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