

**State of Maine | 132nd Legislature  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Testimony of Hannah Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association  
March 10, 2025**

Supporting:

**LD 258 “Resolve, to Establish a Program to Recruit and Retain Behavioral Health Clinicians”**

Sponsored by Senator Harold Stewart

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, the Director of Policy at the Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA). MPCA is a membership organization that represents Maine's Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality, accessible and affordable primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 80 service delivery sites across the state.

I am testifying in support of LD 258. Maine's CHCs have long felt the impacts of primary care workforce shortages. In particular, rural areas are experiencing critical challenges with access to care. Some commonly identified issues specific to our CHCs are increased retirements due to an aging workforce; wage inflation and competition; difficulty hiring, recruiting, and retaining clinical and support staff; and a dire need for more primary care physicians, RNs, and behavioral health clinicians, including Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs).

Over 110 FTEs (full-time-equivalent) behavioral health professionals are employed by Maine's CHCs.<sup>1</sup> Health centers integrate behavioral health into the health centers' care model, so patients who access primary care services can also receive these services, including substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, in a familiar and welcoming environment.

However, wait times for accessing care continue to be extremely long and there are still many patients who are unable to receive the critical care they need. MPCA is supportive of all efforts to recruit and retain more behavioral health professionals in our state and this legislation provides another financial resource to support health centers in this work. We greatly appreciate Sen. Stewart's continued dedication to this issue.

MPCA and Maine's CHCs would be happy to provide additional information as needed. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any follow up questions.

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<sup>1</sup> [Uniform Data System \(UDS\) 2022](#)