



Tuesday April 22nd, 2025

Dear Chairs Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Health and Human Services Committee,

I am a family physician and the president of the Maine Academy of Family Physicians, speaking on behalf of the Maine Academy of Family Physicians. The academy strongly supports LD 1497, “An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Primary Care Reporting by the Maine Quality Forum and to Establish the Primary Care Advisory Council”

LD1497 is necessary to improve the healthcare of all Mainers and ensure we have a robust primary care workforce to meet the needs of our population, which is the oldest and most rural in the country.

In health care, a crisis is “the point in the course of a disease at which a decisive change occurs, leading either to recovery or to death”. We are currently at that point with primary care. Studies have consistently shown that in areas with more primary care doctors, there is more access to health care, longer life expectancies, and less overall health costs.¹ However, less than 10% of all health care spending in Maine goes to primary care,² a primary care office visit is paid 1/4 of what is paid for some specialist visits³ and only 43% of Americans have a long standing relationship with a primary care doctor⁴. Due to many factors, primary care doctors are leaving the profession, retiring early, or working fewer hours.

Unfortunately the future doesn’t look any better. Over the last decade the number of physicians entering primary care after their training has steadily declined to 20% in 2022³. Almost 50% of family physicians in Maine are nearing retirement⁵ and only 47% of the family medicine residents trained in Maine continue practicing here after they finish their training.⁶

But you probably didn’t need me to share these concerning facts. I am sure you know someone who cannot find a primary care doctor accepting patients or who has been waiting months to finally see one.

I want to revisit that earlier definition of a crisis, “the point in the course of a disease at which a decisive change occurs...”

For the past two years the Maine Academy of Family Physicians has been participating in a nation wide collaboration to develop ways to strengthen primary care. We observed that states making the most amount of progress in this have primary care advisory councils already in place. Many of these councils not only measure primary care spending in their state (like Maine currently does) but also assess primary care access and quality. Last year we spoke with participants from seven state primary care advisory councils to study their effectiveness and best practices.⁷

The primary care advisory council outlined in LD 1497 incorporates the lessons learned from that research. It will be a diverse body of primary care clinicians, health care stakeholders, legislators, and members of the Department of Health and Human Services working together to strengthen primary care and improve the health of Mainers. This bill will also expand the scope of the Maine Quality Forum to not only inform us how much we spend on primary care but also whether we have enough primary care doctors to meet our residents' needs and whether all Mainers have timely access to primary care regardless of where they live.

We are at a point in primary care where we can make a decisive change. We can take action to strengthen it so all Mainers can stay healthy or we can maintain the status quo allowing it to crumble and leaving Mainers without a trusted physician to turn to.

We urge you to vote in favor of LD 1497.

Marco Cornelio MD, FAAFP
President, Maine Academy of Family Physicians

1. Starfield B, She L, Macinko J. "Contribution of primary care to health systems and health". Milbank Q. 2005;83(3):457-502.
2. Public Law, Chapter 244 Annual Report: Maine Primary Care Spending 2021-2023. <https://mhdo.maine.gov/mqf.html>
3. "The Health of U.S. Primary Care: 2025 Scorecard Report. The Cost of Neglect: How Chronic Underinvestment in Primary Care is Failing US Patients". Millbank Fund. <https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Milbank-Scorecard-2025-ACCESS-v07.pdf>

4. Finger on the Pulse: The State of Primary Care in the U.S. and Nine Other Countries. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/mar/finger-on-pulse-primary-care-us-nine-countries>
5. American Association of Medical Colleges 'Maine Physician Workforce Profile: <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2019-12/state-physician-Maine-2019%5B1%5D.pdf>
6. The Robert Graham Center. "The State of Primary Care Physician Workforce: Maine." 2018, <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/maps-data-tools/state-collections/phys-workforce/Maine.pdf>
7. "Strengthening Primary Care in Maine: Considerations for Establishing a Maine Multi-Stakeholder Primary Care Council." Blythe C. Thompson. 2024