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Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
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April 23, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1634 – *An Act Regarding MaineCare Waiting Lists*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1634 – *An Act Regarding MaineCare Waiting Lists*.

This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services (the “Department”) to require that for any service covered under the MaineCare program, an individual enrolled in the MaineCare program may not be required to wait for services longer than 6 months from the time the services are requested. If at any time a provider's waiting list exceeds the 6-month waiting limit for those individuals, the Department must submit to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters a corrective action plan to reduce waiting times within 3 months from the time the department becomes aware of this occurrence.

The Department cannot comply with this bill as drafted. With the exception of certain provider/service waitlists defined or required by Department rules, and monitored accordingly, the Department does not and cannot monitor how long members wait for services or whether providers have and maintain waitlists for services.

In general, Members may wait for services due to a lack of provider availability and capacity, and in the case of 1915(c) home and community-based waiver services, available funding. While the Department continues to make efforts to encourage providers to enroll in MaineCare, improve funding streams, and assist with workforce development initiatives, the Department has limited ability to address provider shortages which affect all Mainers or to create funding to expand service availability.

In addition, the requirement to develop, implement and oversee a corrective action plan within three months every time the Department becomes aware of a provider’s waitlist requiring a wait longer than 6 months for a MaineCare covered service is impracticable, costly, and would not address the underlying cause of waitlists – provider shortages.

To meet the requirements set forth in LD 1634, providers would need to report their waitlists to the Department and engage in corrective action plans when required. Other providers may not have official waitlists, but may be scheduling patients for services beyond 6 months. These providers would need to develop new processes to report on these individuals. This effort would be a substantial administrative burden for most providers and may require additional staff depending on the provider’s individual needs.

The Department would need to develop a system and hire staff to obtain information about, and then monitor, the wait time for services for every MaineCare enrolled provider; enrollment currently totals 4,729 individual providers. Establishing and maintaining such a system would be incredibly burdensome and costly for both the Department and providers.

The Department does not believe that this bill will have a positive impact on members or providers. We would be happy to provide additional information and further discuss the challenges associated with LD 1634 and our opposition to moving forward with the bill. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Probert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michelle Probert

Director

Office of MaineCare Services

Maine Department of Health and Human Services