

Testimony to the Health and Human Services Work Session on LD 1578

Good afternoon Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, members of the Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

I am Dr. Karen Miller, concerned community member and physician from Belfast, here in support of LD 1578,

It is important to recognize that LD 1578 will not only establish a mechanism for State review of proposed reductions in healthcare services and the impact of those reductions,

It also

(3) Allows DHHS to evaluate proposed discontinuations against the stipulations of its previously granted Certificates of Need (CONs).

DHHS oversight following CON approval is currently limited to 3 years.

Why is that important?

I'll give you an example.

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In 2008, the relationship between Waldo County Healthcare, Inc. and MaineHealth was defined by a DHHS approved and community supported Certificate of Need agreement.

The 2008 CON stipulated our community would

- 1) retain our healthcare assets
 - 2) have veto power over removal of a healthcare service
 - 3) retain significant influence over our governance through a locally selected Board.
- These rights were lost over the ensuing 10 years.

I submitting written testimony outlining the steps resulting in the loss of Waldo's rights granted under the 2008 Certificate of Need.

It is important, in our case, to point out that we lost those rights in spite of Waldo's healthcare system remaining profitable for in excess of 25 years.

When our healthcare entities were dissolved and their assets were taken away, the community lost years of public donations that had been carefully invested to ensure the future of our community's access to local healthcare services.

How did we lose our assets, our donations, our ability to veto discontinuation of service and meaningful input into our governance?

The steps were many – each allowed because State oversight had expired and, in one case, there was omission of mandated public notice in our community of impending threats to our rights.

LD 1578 represents an initial step toward strengthening the goals of the original Certificate of Need Act of 2001, especially the aim to provide access quality healthcare for all of Maine's residents.

Let's give our State's agencies the power and the tools to make that happen and give our Maine citizens a meaningful voice at the table.

Once again, let Maine lead the nation, this time by increasing the transparency and accountability of healthcare governance. Let's pass LD 1578.

Thank you for your time, consideration and particularly your support of our residents continued access to healthcare in Maine.