

Jeff Davis  
Belfast  
LD 1578

Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services  
May 7, 2025  
Re: LD 1578

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, ranking members, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services committee. The rate of change in the world around us feels like it is constantly accelerating, especially in the field of health care. It is a struggle to feel relevant as an individual when the change drivers are ever bigger corporations, including non-profit and for-profit health care businesses.

In my hometown of Belfast, MaineHealth is the behemoth controlling the health care offerings of our local hospital, formerly known as Waldo County Hospital, Inc. (WCHI). When MaineHealth (MH) and WCHI joined forces in 2008 the Certificate of Need (CON) promised a locally appointed autonomous board with a say about services offered at WCGH.

That is no longer the case. In 2018, MH administratively cemented its control over all of its assets including WCHI through a financial consolidation. This significant move should have, at a minimum, included a request for clarification from Maine's Department of Health and Human Services whether a CON was needed. Now MH makes all the appointments to our board.

WCHI, a state designated Critical Care Hospital, had a nationally recognized history of excellence before joining forces with MH. It was creative and mobile in its management and was able to attract doctors well above its weight class as a 25 bed facility. It also was, and continues to be, profitable. In 2023 it was the third most profitable hospital in Maine, only behind two of the largest hospitals in the state.

Now, like many other hospitals in Maine and across the country, MH has closed WCHI's birthing and delivery capabilities. At a recent community meeting an executive from MH acknowledged WCHI could afford to continue to provide those services. In MH's press release attempting to justify their labor delivery decision they state, "... in calendar year 2022, just 27 percent of families expecting a child and living in the Waldo service area gave birth at MaineHealth Waldo Hospital."

MH's acknowledgement of its abysmal ability to attract families to WCHI for births is more a statement about their unwillingness to analyze why the rate is so low and to develop a plan to better communicate with those families about the quality of WCHI's services.

And that is why LD 1578 is so necessary. Birthing isn't the only field where services are being moved from WCHI. Cardiology, ENT and audiology are additional fields that have been decreased or fully removed from WCHI. With the dramatic consolidation of health care providers in Maine under two organizations the current practice of 3-year reviews subsequent to CON approvals is no longer viable. Dramatic disruption or removal of health care services from communities has impacts to the attractiveness for businesses to move to, or stay in, those impacted communities. Corporate health care decisions are made with the best interests of the corporations, not the communities where their assets are located.

Thank you for opportunity to testify.

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