

Testimony of Coralie Giles, RN  
President, Maine State Nurses Association  
Vice-President, National Nurses United

**In SUPPORT of LD 1937, “An Act to Require Hospitals and Hospital-affiliated Providers to Provide Financial Assistance Programs for Medical Care”**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Hearing: May 12, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

Dear Chair Ingwersen, Chair Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

On behalf of more than 4,000 registered nurses and health care professionals providing patient care in our state, **the Maine State Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee/National Nurses United (MSNA) urges the Committee to support LD 1937.**

**Requiring hospitals to provide charity care to low-income patients is a key step to ending medical debt.** Four in ten U.S. adults have some form of health care debt.<sup>1</sup> Most bills leading to debt are from a one-time or short-term medical expense.<sup>2</sup> Medical debt eats up family savings, leads people to skip paying other bills or change their housing situation, and impacts credit scores leading to more financial problems.<sup>3</sup> Hospital financial assistance programs can save patients from serious financial consequences for medical emergencies, and save hospitals from spending resources chasing patients down for money they do not have.

**The vast majority of hospitals in Maine are tax-exempt. Providing free care to patients who cannot afford it is in line with their obligation to serve the community and uses a relatively small percentage of hospital budgets.** In 2023, 32 of Maine’s 34 hospitals were non-profit.<sup>4</sup> On a national level, Kaiser Family Foundation found non-profit hospitals totaled \$16 billion in charity care costs but benefited from \$28.1 billion in tax exemptions.<sup>5</sup> The national average

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<sup>1</sup> Lopes L et al. June 16, 2022. *Health Care Debt In The U.S.: The Broad Consequences Of Medical And Dental Bills*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-health-care-debt-survey-main-findings/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> KFF. *Hospitals by Ownership Type*. 2023, <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/hospitals-by-ownership/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

<sup>5</sup> Godwin J et al. March 14, 2023. *The Estimated Value of Tax Exemption for Nonprofit Hospitals Was About \$28 Billion in 2020*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/the-estimated-value-of-tax-exemption-for-nonprofit-hospitals-was-about-28-billion-in-2020/>.

charity care costs were 2.2% of operating expenses in 2023. According to KFF, Maine hospitals' average charity care costs in 2023 were 0.6%. Even very good charity care programs cost less in a state like Maine with Medicaid expansion. Thus, LD 1937's expansion of charity care is unlikely to increase Maine hospitals' charity care costs to a level beyond the benefits of non-profit status.

**Nurses want to improve our patients' lives, not have our patients burdened with debt they cannot afford after we treat them.** While the ultimate solution to medical debt is single payer health care, expanding charity care is a positive step. **We urge you to support LD 1937.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Coralie Giles RN".

Coralie (Cokie) Giles, RN  
President, Maine State Nurses Association  
Vice-President, National Nurses United