

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE
AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Testimony of Peter Murray in Support of LD 1269

May 14, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Peter Murray, I live in Portland, and I have practiced law in Maine for more than 55 years. This testimony is submitted in support of LD 1269, “Resolve, to Study the Costs and Funding of a Universal Health Care Plan for Maine.”

The purpose of the resolve is to require Maine’s responsible governmental agencies formally to study and analyze the potential costs and funding of a truly universal health care plan for the State of Maine and to report the results of such study to the second special session of this Legislature. Such a study could open the door to a remarkable advance in the provision of health care services for Maine and its citizens and a rationalization and focusing of our disparate and sometimes ramshackle health care establishment on high quality easily accessible patient care at a reasonable cost.

LD 1269 requests Maine’s Office of Affordable Health Care in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services to perform a study of the costs and potential funding of a publicly funded, privately provided universal health care plan for Maine. It is evident to us all that Maine’s health care system is under serious strain and is breaking down at least in some areas. Birthing centers are closing. Hospitals are shuttering. Other hospitals are forced to merge with out of state hospital chains in hopes of thereby getting access to capital. Costs are rising rapidly. The level of satisfaction with health care, its cost and accessibility in Maine, has plummeted. All this is known to us all.

For a long time now, the notion of a statewide universal health care system has been floated as a potential solution to at least some of the deficiencies in our present system. Mainers need only to look next door to Canada to see such a system in operation. Although

no system is without its limitations, the experience in Canada and elsewhere where universal health care is the norm suggests that Maine should look hard at introducing such a system here.

Ideally our federal government would sponsor a universal health care system by expansion of Medicare or otherwise. A state-sponsored system is likely to run into issues of coordination and overlap with federal programs that provide or affect health care. However, the present political composition of Congress makes meaningful health care legislation very unlikely. If Maine is to improve health care for its citizens, it will have to go forward on its own.

Enactment of this resolve does not establish a universal health care system. It only requires a good faith study of the financial considerations in establishing such a system. Prior studies suggest that such a system can be viable and would provide a great improvement in health care in Maine. But you, our legislators, should see for yourselves. If the study suggests that such a system would likely fail, so be it. If it shows that such a system can succeed in providing good health care to all Mainers at reasonable cost, then you will have what you need to place Maine in the lead among the states in this vital area.

Dirigo!