



CITY OF BANGOR

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Testimony in Support of LD 1970 – An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Consent for HIV Testing and Disclosure of Related Medical Information for Insurance Purposes

May 20, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Jennifer Gunderman, Director of Bangor Public Health and Community Services, and I'm providing testimony on behalf of the City of Bangor in Support of LD 1970, "An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Consent for HIV Testing and Disclosure of Related Medical Information for Insurance Purposes".

The City of Bangor is experiencing the largest outbreak of HIV in Maine over the past few decades. Historically, the Bangor area has 1-2 new cases of HIV reported a year. In the past nineteen months, there have been twenty-four reported cases of HIV in the Bangor area. We know that this is only a fraction of the actual cases of HIV in the area. A key strategy to HIV prevention and control of the current outbreak is testing. Knowing your HIV status is critical to receiving timely care and reducing risk of transmission. Recently we are experiencing a plateau in HIV testing in the area due to a number of challenges including stigma, loss opportunities in the health care system to test, and complexity of health issues faced by the population at risk.

The current policy requires a person opt-in for HIV testing. This means people must sign an additional consent to receive HIV testing. No other health condition, including hepatitis C requires this extra consent for testing. The separate written consent for HIV testing creates significant barriers for routine HIV testing. First, it adds another unnecessary administrative burden on the health care delivery system. Second, it reinforces stigma associated with HIV to require another level of consent. LD1970 modernizes HIV testing in Maine. It aligns HIV testing with other routine testing by providing informed, opt-out consent under general medical consent. I cannot stress enough how important this strategy is for reducing barriers to HIV testing. LD1970 could provide an important tool for addressing the current HIV outbreak in Bangor and preventing future ones. To do so, we urge you to support LD 1970. Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

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