



HEALTHREACH

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

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State of Maine | 132nd Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
Written Testimony of Constance Coggins on behalf of HealthReach Community Health
Centers
01.26.2026

Supporting:

LD 2151, "An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas"

Sponsored by Senator Reny

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, my name is Constance Coggins—I am the President/CEO of HealthReach Community Health Centers. HealthReach provides primary care, behavioral health, psychiatric medication management and dental services to 26,000 residents across a broad swath of central and western Maine in Albion, Belgrade, Bethel, Bingham, Fairfield, Kingfield, Livermore Falls, Madison, Rangeley, Richmond, Strong, and the village of Coopers Mills within Whitefield regardless of their health insurance or ability to pay. Alongside Maine's other community health centers, we together compose the largest independent primary care network in the state.

We strongly support LD 2151 and thank Senator Reny and the cosponsors for reintroducing this critical legislation to provide much-needed support for FQHCs and to strengthen access to and expansion of pharmacy services across Maine. The underlying need remains unresolved since the rescission of this funding from the 2024 supplemental budget.

Geographic isolation and the declining number of rural pharmacies result in uneven access to medications and pharmacy services. This affects vulnerable populations the most, including older adults, individuals with limited mobility, and those without consistent transportation.

LD 2151 would establish a grant program, overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services, to provide support for FQHCs to develop or expand their capacity to provide greater

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Bethel Family Health Center
Bingham Area Health & Dental Center
Bulldog Health Center

Lovejoy Health Center
Madison Area Health Center
Mt. Abram Regional Health Center
Rangeley Family Medicine

Richmond Area Health Center
Sheepscot Valley Health Center
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Western Maine Family Health Center



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access to affordably priced drugs for their patients by increasing FQHCs' ability to deliver pharmacy services to those patients.

For example, the greater Rangeley area that is served by one of our sites qualifies as a 'pharmacy desert' which is defined as a geographic area where residents have limited or no convenient access to a community pharmacy within a reasonable distance. It is a 45-minute drive from the Rangeley community to pharmacies located in Farmington or Kingfield. Winter conditions can exacerbate the difficulty of the trip. While mail order or delivery services may resolve some of the challenges, these services do not address acute medication needs such as the need for an antibiotic to address an infection. Some medications (those that are temperature sensitive) cannot be shipped via mail. Lastly, recent news reports have highlighted some concerns about the timeliness of mail delivery in rural areas in Maine.

This bill would provide the foundational funding to enable our organization to conduct an analysis to examine the feasibility of developing an in-house pharmacy or implementing an automated pharmacy system. To date, we have seen some of the chain pharmacies choose not to participate in the Medicare Transaction Facilitator that would permit these pharmacies to dispense the medications that are subject to negotiated pricing under the Inflation Reduction Act, thus reducing access to these medications. Not only would an in-house pharmacy facilitate access to these medications (and any identified for negotiation in future years), but integrated pharmacy services also offered through an in-house pharmacy would improve care coordination, support medication adherence, and strengthen chronic disease management.

On behalf of HealthReach Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 207-872-5610 or constance.coggins@healthreach.org with any follow-up questions.

Constance Coggins

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