

Elizabeth Trehu
Vienna
LD 2212

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, Senator Grohoski, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services: my name is Dr. Elizabeth Trehu and I live in Vienna. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 2212.” I am a retired hematologist-oncologist who has seen first hand the devastation experienced by cancer patients and their families when the cost of their care depletes all their savings.

You have all heard the myth of the trickle down economy, the idea that giving more money to the rich will result in better lives for the rest of us as they stimulate the economy. I’m writing today about “trickle up economic destruction,” when cuts impacting the poorest in our communities result in devastation that reaches far up into the middle class.

Cuts and work requirements for healthcare in HR1 could take away health insurance from 30,000 Mainers, many of whom live in rural areas. That leads to decreased funding and reimbursement to hospitals and doctors, and will result in job losses, hospital closures, and loss of essential services and life-saving care, especially in rural areas. Young people won’t want to move to an area without maternity services, retirees won’t want to live multiple hours from the nearest hospitals, and the result is declining populations in Maine’s many rural communities, which are already struggling. People who can afford to, including doctors and other highly trained healthcare professionals will move, often out of state, leaving the most needy behind with no services.

The only solution is for the wealthiest in the state to fill the gap created by the federal budget cuts. I used to live in Massachusetts, where everyone predicted that the wealth tax would drive wealthy people and companies away from Massachusetts. The opposite happened. Wealthy people need the goods and services provided by a healthy economy to live, and when the middle class thrives, everyone benefits. Someone making over a million dollars a year is not going to feel the loss of a few tens of thousands of dollars that could make life saving differences for the rest of us.

I urge you to raise the revenue to provide Mainers with decent healthcare by making the wealthiest pay their fair share.