

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services: my name is Jonathan Haines and I live in Biddeford. I am a retired Registered Nurse with 25 years of service as a nurse. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 2212. I am here today to advocate that the Legislature take action to offset the horrific consequences of the Federal government's budget cuts that directly affect the health and wellbeing of every Mainer.

Half of my career as a nurse was spent as a School Nurse. I worked through the COVID-19 pandemic. As a school nurse I experienced first hand what I had been taught in nursing school: you cannot separate the health of a community from the wealth of a community.

Actions taken at the Federal level are forcing us to be more creative and more resourceful about finding ways to provide quality healthcare access to every single person in Maine. This is especially true as corporations and venture capitalists take over the national healthcare system in order to create windfall profits by buying and then closing hospitals. True public health is based on a robust system of healthcare for all, not on a system that denies access and eliminates services.

Working people everywhere live in conditions that increase their risk for chronic disease and that create artificial barriers to getting the health care that they need. For both individuals and for the communities they live in, access to healthcare is a matter of life and death.

Our challenge here in Maine right now is to respond in ways that promote the health of all Mainers and of all Maine communities, large and small, rich and poor. We must find ways to increase access to maternity care, to emergency medical care and to primary care that can prevent illness and chronic disease. All of these are services that have been lost over the past few years.

We all understand that this legislature has a huge challenge if it is to take care of the health of all of us. I came here today and stand before you because I think that you are resourceful enough and that you are caring enough to take on this challenge.

One way that the Legislature has taken action to provide care to all Mainers is the establishment of MaineCare. MaineCare can be a shield between the attacks by the federal government together with healthcare corporations against every community in our state.

In order to provide that shield we need to act to replace the resources that the federal government has stolen from us. We can protect and we can expand MaineCare as a promise for better health for all Mainers.

I understand that LD 2208 is currently before the legislature and creates funds to counteract Trump's cuts to medicaid and healthcare subsidies. Provisions which backfill and support MaineCare, and stabilize hospitals and other healthcare providers must be fully funded in the budget. This is one step that can be taken to strengthen our commitment to MaineCare and to the health of all Mainers.

Finally I want to emphasize that as you consider this budget that you recognize that access to affordable housing, access to clean water and clean air, time for recreation, access to education, employment opportunities and the civil liberties that protect people's right to organize and to live together with dignity are also necessary parts of the larger system of health and wellness that we rely on our Legislature to help us to create and to nourish. Thank you.

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Jonathan Haines, RN
Biddeford
LD 2212
See File Attached