



Consumers for Affordable Health Care

*Advocating the right to quality, affordable
health care for all Mainers.*

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Testimony in Support of:

LD 2129, An Act to Prohibit Liens on Principal Residences and Wage Garnishments for Medical Debt

February 17, 2026

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of LD 2129, An Act to Prohibit Liens on Principal Residences and Wage Garnishments for Medical Debt.

My name is Kate Ende, and I am the Policy Director at Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable health care for every person in Maine. As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program (CAP), which operates a toll-free HelpLine. Our HelpLine fields thousands of calls and emails every year from people across Maine who need help obtaining, keeping, using, or fixing problems with private health insurance or with accessing or affording health care services. CAHC also serves as the Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and helps people apply for and navigate the enrollment process for MaineCare. It is with that background that we provide these comments.

Medical debt is a widespread problem burdening thousands of Mainers. Recent polling conducted in Maine, which we will be releasing soon, shows that 4 in 10 Maine families have taken on medical debt in the last two years and that one out of three families with medical debt owe \$5,000 or more.

Last year, this Committee and Maine's Legislature unanimously took a significant step to protect Mainer's struggling with medical debt, by prohibiting the reporting of medical debt on consumer credit reports. This bill builds on this progress by further protecting Mainers from potential harmful impacts of medical debt.

Medical debt is unique in that it is not a good predictor of someone's ability to pay their debts. Research conducted by the CFPB found that "medical billing data on a credit report is less predictive of future repayment than reporting on traditional credit obligations. Mistakes and inaccuracies are common and can be compounded by problems such as disputes over insurance

payments or complex billing practices.”¹ Medical debt can also be unpredictable and unavoidable, as people do not choose when they will experience a medical emergency or receive a diagnosis of a serious health condition. Several states have taken action to protect their residents from wage garnishment and liens on their homes resulting from medical debt and Maine should follow in this lead.

Medical debt is affecting the day-to-day lives of thousands of Mainers. Many with medical debt are forced to choose between paying off their debt or paying for groceries, heat, gas, childcare, and other essential needs. Mainers should not have to make these impossible decisions between paying for medical care and meeting their basic needs or putting their family home at risk. For these reasons I urge you to build on the progress made by this committee last year and vote ought to pass on LD 2129 to strengthen consumer protections for Maine people struggling with medical debt.

Thank you and I’d be happy to answer any questions.

¹ https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/press_release/new-york-governor-signs-ban-on-reporting-medical-debt-to-credit-reporting-agencies/