



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 2208, An Act to Offset Federal Cuts to Health Insurance for Certain Maine Families and Seniors

February 26, 2026

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. I am Kate Ende, Policy Director for Consumers for Affordable Health Care. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in strong support of LD 2208, An Act to Offset Federal Cuts to Health Insurance for Certain Maine Families and Seniors.

Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC) is 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 and access to health care services under MaineCare. It is with that background that we provide these comments.

We strongly support this bill because it provides targeted tools to protect access to care and stabilize coverage in the face of significant federal changes and uncertainty.

Earlier today, we released the results from a recent survey that found:

- Four in ten Maine families have taken on medical debt within the past two years.
- Seven out of ten Mainers report they have delayed or skipped medical care or treatments due to costs.
- More than one in three Mainers have struggled to pay for basic necessities, like food, heat, and housing, due to medical costs.

Recent changes at the federal level have exasperated existing affordability barriers.

The expiration of the enhanced premium tax credits under the American Rescue Plan Act have resulted in significant premium increases for Mainers who purchase coverage through Maine's Health Insurance Marketplace, CoverME.gov.

Through our HelpLine, we regularly speak with older adults nearing retirement, self-employed individuals, and working families who rely on Marketplace coverage. Many of these individuals were

eligible for federal subsidies under the Affordable Care Act and benefited from the enhanced credits that made coverage truly affordable. When those enhanced credits expired, premiums increased by thousands of dollars per year for many families.

To illustrate how unaffordable coverage has become without subsidies, consider this example: A 64-year-old couple living in Aroostook County with an annual income of \$85,000, which is just slightly over 400% FPL, would have to pay 50% of their income in order to purchase a silver plan through CoverME.gov. That is before accounting for deductibles, copayments, and other out-of-pocket costs.

| Example of CoverME.gov plan options for a 64-year-old couple living in Aroostook County with an annual income of \$85,000 | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| | Annual Premium (in dollars) | Annual Premium (as a percentage of income) |
| Cheapest Bronze Plan \$7,200/\$8,000 (Tier 1/ Tier 2) individual deductible | \$31,440.72 | 37% of income |
| Cheapest Silver Plan \$5,000/ \$7,500 (Tier 1/ Tier 2) individual deductible | \$42,544.08 | 50% of income |

Devoting one-third to one-half of household income to health insurance premiums alone is not realistic. In practice, families facing these costs often forgo coverage, delay retirement, reduce savings, or go without needed care. The Health Care Premium Stabilization Fund would create a state subsidy to blunt these affordability shocks. This stabilization measure will help prevent coverage loss and protect Mainers from being priced out of the market.

Mainers are facing a healthcare affordability crisis right now. The number one reason Mainers cite for not having health insurance is the cost of premiums. LD 2208 will provide much needed relief to help more Mainers afford the coverage they need.

LD 2208 would also create the MaineCare Federal Response Fund. MaineCare is a lifeline for nearly one in three Mainers, including children, older adults, people with disabilities, and low-wage workers. Any reductions in federal contributions would create immediate and significant budget pressures for the state. Establishing a dedicated response fund is responsible fiscal planning that protects both MaineCare members and the broader health care system. Notably, this fund could also be used to strengthen outreach efforts to MaineCare members regarding federal changes, such as the new work requirements that will begin to take effect at the end of this year. Experiences in other states have shown that many of the people who lose coverage due to work requirements are working or qualify for exemption from the requirement, but still lose coverage due to administrative barriers. Outreach and education will be critical to ensuring that Mainers who are eligible for MaineCare do not lose their coverage.

LD 2208 is a comprehensive approach to health care stabilization. It:

- Strengthens rural health infrastructure,
- Shields Marketplace consumers from devastating affordability shocks,
- Creates a prudent safeguard for MaineCare funding, and
- Reinforces a reinsurance program that lowers premiums for many individuals and small businesses.

This legislation is fundamentally about preventing disruption. It is about ensuring that Maine people do not lose coverage or lose access to health care because of shifting federal policy landscapes. We urge the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions.