



March 5, 2026

Committee on Health and Human Services  
Room 209, Cross Building  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**RE: Committee on Health and Human Services Public Hearing on LD 2196**

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support of LD 2196**. United States of Care (USofCare) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to ensure [everyone](#) has access to quality, affordable health care, regardless of health status, social need, or income. We work in states across the country to develop pragmatic policy solutions that are designed to respond to people's needs. LD 2196 is a smart policy solution that tackles many of the issues we know Mainers are affected by and care deeply about.

Our listening work across the country—and in Maine—demonstrates just how much people are struggling with the rising cost of health care, especially when seeking care at hospitals. We know that people just want health care they can afford and rely on, and a primary care and behavioral health experience that they can easily access.

We recently conducted “listening” research to hear from people across Maine—from Machias to Lewiston—and we [learned](#) that affordability shapes so many health care decisions. [People in Machias](#) talked about disregarding health care bills and accepting medical debt as the cost of staying well. Given these challenges, it is no surprise that Mainers want change: [a recent survey](#) showed us that 85% of Mainers support proposals that would limit the amount consumers pay for services provided by hospitals and 80% of Mainers with medical debt attribute it to hospital care.

While we know people and employers are impacted by the high cost of prescription drugs and the rising cost of insurance, policymakers are right to focus on addressing hospital prices as a way to drive toward affordability. In Maine, [the largest share](#) of total health care spending goes towards hospitals, driven in part by the [higher-than-average prices they charge](#). By capping excessive hospital prices and applying downward pressure on how much their prices grow, LD 2196 will deliver immediate and long-term premium and out-of-pocket savings to people and employers.

Importantly, because the price caps don't apply to critical access and financially distressed hospitals, this legislation protects against negative impact to local economies and patient access. In addition, establishing primary and behavioral health payment floors will ensure these critically-important providers are paid adequately and that people will continue to have access



to care. Lastly, the legislation includes restrictions on prior authorization, which will improve the process for patients and providers in a cost-effective way.

State policymakers across the country are responding to their constituents' calls for action by advancing meaningful reforms to tackle high hospital prices, including [establishing limits on what hospitals are able to charge](#). While each state's landscape is unique, these states' experiences demonstrate the positive impact similar policies would have in Maine and provide valuable insights on the market impact overall.

For example, Oregon's implementation of hospital payment caps within their state employee health plan [generated \\$107 million](#) in savings for their state employees in the first year alone and, notably, [hospital finances have remained stable](#). In addition, [Washington's public option](#), which includes hospital payment caps and primary care payment floors, now offers premiums that are [50% lower than other plans](#) and [people have maintained access to care](#). Lastly, while not fully implemented, nearby Vermont also [recently enacted legislation](#) that similarly establishes limits on hospital prices through reference-based pricing.

LD 2196 is a common-sense solution for Maine that protects access to affordable care and relieves the growing financial burden that employers and Mainers across the state pay every year. **For these reasons, USofCare supports LD 2196 and respectfully requests a "yes" vote.** We thank the committee for its work on this issue and hope you consider United States of Care as a resource moving forward. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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