



**Testimony in Support of
LD 223, Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to
Amend Its Rules Regarding Pharmacy Services
February 15, 2023**

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Laurie Belden, I am a resident of Durham and the Executive Director of the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine (Alliance). The Alliance is a network of home health care, hospice, home care and personal care providers across our State delivering in-home care to older adults and disabled individuals of all ages, allowing them to stay in their home and community.

I'm here today to testify in support of **LD 223, Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Amend Its Rules Regarding Pharmacy Services**. I wish to thank Rep. Zager for sponsoring this important bill.

This legislation will allow home care providers that provide services under MaineCare Sections 19, 40, and 96, and the State-funded Section 63 program, to contract with pharmacists for consultations and medication evaluations, either via telehealth or in person in the patient's home.

Home care nurses often face a problem when they enter a patient's home to provide care – a medicine cabinet or basket on the counter filled with pill bottles, and an unclear picture of where all the medications come from, which ones are really needed, and which ones might be counter-indicated. Many patients would benefit from a pharmacist as part of their care team, and would experience better health outcomes if that pharmacist were allowed to conduct patient visits, either in the home or via telehealth.

During the 130th Legislature, this Committee unanimously supported a bill to make several improvements to home care services in Maine, including this home care pharmacy benefit. Unfortunately, the other portions of that bill led to a fiscal note that went unfunded, and therefore that bill ultimately died on adjournment in May 2022.

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Members of our Alliance continue to report on the importance of having routine pharmacist consultations and medication evaluations—particularly for patients with complex polypharmacy -- to enhance the quality of care and safety for those receiving care in the home. So, we worked with Rep. Zager to reintroduce similar legislation this year, but with a singular focus – to direct the Department to provide reimbursement for the services of a Maine-licensed pharmacist to provide medication evaluation or consultation within home care sections of MaineCare. This bill allows the flexibility to provide this life-saving benefit by telehealth (when appropriate and effective) or otherwise during an in-home visit.

We have had positive, transparent discussions with the Department regarding the intent of this bill and the relationship between high levels of polypharmacy and hospitalizations. Our understanding is that it would be possible to add this pharmacy consultation and evaluation service as a reimbursable service within the above-mentioned home care sections of MaineCare.

Hospitals, nursing homes, and home-based care are like a 3-legged stool in the state’s healthcare landscape. Caring for Mainers in the home is essential to relieving the stress on facilities by keeping patients out of acute and long-term care settings. One way to significantly reduce hospitalizations is to implement an effective pharmacist consultation and medicine evaluation as part of the patient’s care plan for those receiving care in the home.

We need your support in passing this legislation to help us serve Mainers who choose to receive care in the home. By properly managing their medications, we have a better chance of keeping them safe and out of the hospital or acute care facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this important legislation to keep home care patients safe.

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