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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan introducing

LD 1161, An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce **LD 1161, An Act to Fund Free Health Clinics** for your consideration.

This bill provides funding for free clinics across the state, of which there are currently six. However, I will focus my remarks on the Portland Community Free Clinic (PCFC), because it is the one I am most familiar with. The PCFC provides healthcare at no cost to uninsured adults between the ages of 18 and 65 who live in southern Maine, primarily Cumberland and York counties. Its mission is to provide high quality healthcare at no cost to those in the community who lack health insurance. Traditionally, the population served is in the ‘donut hole’ – people who earn too much to qualify for MaineCare, but not enough to afford effective health insurance without a large deductible. They are largely working people, but they are the working lower-wage jobs whose employers don’t provide health insurance.

The population they serve has both changed and grown in the past years due to the pandemic, with people accessing services who have lost jobs that provided health insurance.

Using PCFC as an example, the clinic is extremely cost-effective and provides hundreds of people in Greater Portland with primary care. It runs largely on volunteers and donations and has a very small annual budget to cover the salary of the staff who provide case management, volunteer coordination and other essentials. Everything else is donated.

In short, Maine’s free clinics are a very efficient means of providing health care to a population that really needs it, and whose needs and numbers have grown due to the pandemic. Please vote ‘ought to pass’ on LD 1161.

Thank you very much for your consideration, I would be glad to answer any questions.