



Troy D. Jackson  
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony in Support of LD 1792  
Resolve, to Establish the Rural Health Services Task Force**

**Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
May 8, 2023**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Troy Jackson. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and have the great honor of representing Aroostook County in the Legislature. I am here today to introduce LD 1792, "Resolve, to Establish the Rural Health Services Task Force."

Access to quality, affordable health care is critical to the health and well-being of our families, communities and economy. It's also essential to our freedom as Mainers to live healthy and productive lives. However, access to health care remains a challenge in Maine, especially in rural areas. Rural regions of the state lack the resources that places like Bangor, Lewiston or Portland have as major population centers.

To improve access to care and determine the best path forward, we must take a closer look at the unique health care challenges in rural Maine and hear from both patients and providers. This legislation would establish a rural health task force to do just that.

The task force would include key stakeholders of experts in providing health care and rural health services. The group would examine the system as it stands now, identify possible changes that could make the system more sustainable (without sacrificing quality or access) and propose measures to protect access and improve care coordination. The group would also be tasked with assessing potential consequences if any rural hospitals were to close. Finally, the task force would also evaluate alternative payment models and determine whether any would improve the access and quality of rural health care.

This approach comes from legislation passed in other states aiming to tackle this exact problem. Vermont created a similar task force to try and answer these questions. Alabama, Tennessee, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas all have programs to either provide resources to rural health facilities or to implement different payment models like value-based payments or global budgets for Medicare and Medicaid – policies that more adequately

reimburse rural health facilities for their services and enable them to stay afloat given the unique challenges related to rural health care.<sup>1</sup>

Making sure folks in rural Maine can get the care they need is deeply important to me. It's about making sure the people I represent get the care they deserve. And it goes without saying that what works in Alabama or in Oregon may not work the same way here in Maine. So rather than following another state's example, this bill convenes a group of stakeholders to examine this issue and look at what solutions would work in Maine, *for Mainers*.

Thank you for your time this morning. I hope you will join me in supporting this measure. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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<sup>1</sup> [VT Law](#), [AL Law](#), [TN Law](#), [OR Program](#), [PA Model](#), [TX Law](#)