



Mike Tipping
Senator, District 8

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and distinguished members of the Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

My name is Mike Tipping. I represent Senate District 8 in Penobscot County and I'm proud to present **LD 329, An Act to Ensure Health Care for All Maine Residents**, as a concept draft and a proposed amendment with language for the bill.

This bill would create the Work Group on Next Steps for Guaranteed Health Care, a focused study group with a mandate to determine the necessary steps that must be taken on a policy and legislative basis in order to fully implement the Maine Health Care Plan, which was established by the 130th Legislature, including an assessment of what information is needed to apply for a federal waiver to provide for all medically necessary health care services for all residents of the State through a unified health care financing system.

In 2021, this committee amended and passed LD 1045, An Act To Support Universal Health Care, sponsored by Rep. Heidi Brooks. It passed by wide majorities in the House and Senate and was enacted into law. The intent was that when federal waivers are available, Maine would be ready to propose and enact a universal health care system.

Federal waivers are important, without them, it would be much more difficult to fold federal programs including Medicare and Medicaid into a state system of guaranteed care.

For Maine and the other states that have indicated an intention to move toward universal health care, the next steps on waivers aren't yet clear. Other states, including California and Oregon have assembled commissions or tasked state agencies with determining the best paths to pursue and the best ways to begin to petition the federal government for these waivers. Other states, including Colorado, Nevada and Washington have taken similar steps to set up state public option plans.

LD 329 is an attempt to figure out those next steps for Maine. The language proposed would create a working group made up of legislators, representatives of the state, policy experts and health care providers with a mandate to explore these questions and recommend next steps and future legislation.

I wanted to provide specific language as a recommendation for the committee, but I don't have strong feelings and I bow to your expertise on the best way to advance these goals. These next steps could instead be investigated by a group with a different makeup or by a state agency, for instance the newly-created Office of Affordable Health Care, if they are given the needed resources.

Finally, I don't need to make the full case for why we must move to a health care system where everyone is covered and no one is left out, how it costs less and why it is a moral imperative. You'll hear many of those arguments from others here today. I'll just say that I lived in Canada for seven years, and have seen and studied a universal, single-payer health care system up close and first hand. I even managed a health insurance plan there for a while. My wife is a health care provider

who has worked in both systems. The biggest difference for Canadians, on a day to day basis that I noticed was that there was a huge weight lifted off everyone's shoulders. It's hard to put into words the difference it makes mentally to never have to worry about how you're going to get health care, to not have to deal with insurance companies for basic care and to not ever have to worry about going bankrupt.

I hope that one day Mainers can live with that same burden lifted off their shoulders. I appreciate your consideration and I'm happy to take any questions.



Senator Scott Wiener, 11th Senate District

Senate Bill 770 – Unified Healthcare Financing

SUMMARY

SB 770 establishes tangible steps on a concrete timeline toward creating a system of guaranteed healthcare for all California residents that will provide better care at lower cost by:

- Directing the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services (HHS) Agency to pursue waiver discussions with the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to facilitate the creation of a unified healthcare financing system;
- Requiring the Secretary to establish a Waiver Development Workgroup of diverse healthcare system stakeholders appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the Assembly, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate;
- Requiring the Secretary to provide quarterly reports to the chairs of the Assembly and Senate Health Committees on the status and outcomes of waiver discussions with the federal government and the progress of the workgroup;
- Requiring the Secretary to submit a complete set of recommendations regarding the elements to be included in a formal waiver application, as specified, by no later than June 1, 2024;

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

The fragmentation and inequities of our current healthcare system – from varying health plan eligibility requirements to the continued lack of effective oversight of these health plans – is harming California residents. These shortcomings result in severe and sometimes lethal gaps in medically necessary health coverage and disproportionately impact historically and systematically marginalized groups.

California has taken important steps to expand access to healthcare for all – most recently expanding Medi-Cal coverage to adults 50 years and older regardless of immigration status – but the state has also recognized that the status quo of healthcare financing is no longer working and that innovative solutions must be explored.

The 2019 Budget Act charged the Healthy California for All Commission with developing a plan that includes options for advancing a health care delivery system in California to provide better care that costs less through a unified financing (UF) system, including, but not limited to, a single-payer financing system, for all California residents.

In their final report, the Commission summarizes the characteristics of the new “unified financing” system as:

- All California residents will be entitled to receive a standard package of health care services;
- This package could include Long Term Care Support and Services, which would relieve huge and growing burdens that are falling on millions of families;
- Entitlement will not vary by age, employment status, disability status, income, immigration status, or other characteristics; and
- Distinctions among Medicare, Medi-Cal, employer-sponsored insurance, and individual market coverage will be eliminated within the system of unified financing.

The report estimates that universal coverage through a unified financing system would save 4,000 or more lives annually, and finds that, “absent a shift to UF, California will incur an additional \$500 billion in medical costs over the next decade.”

SOLUTION

California has the ability to establish a system of guaranteed healthcare for all and provide better care that costs less. SB 770 makes this potential real by establishing a specific statutory pathway for pursuit of this goal.

SUPPORT

- **Healthy California Now Coalition (sponsor)**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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