

May 9, 2023

Senator Donna Bailey
Representative Anne Perry
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
Cross Building, Room 220
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services;

Thank you for the opportunity to share feedback regarding LD 329. I appreciate the intent of this bill and its goal of providing accessible and equitable health care to all Maine people. I do, however, oppose the bill due to concerns about duplication of effort to study and analyze potential public option plans.

Last year, the Legislature enacted P.L. 2021 Ch. 518, which directs the Office of Affordable Health Care to provide a report to the legislature analyzing several policy options, including the introduction of a public option plan, to this committee by January 1, 2024. I believe this report can provide a helpful foundation from which to further consider the potential benefits, and trade-offs, of instituting a publicly funded health plan in Maine.

L.D. 329 creates a workgroup which is directed 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” and to include “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.” At this time, however, no such waiver exists at the federal level. If such a waiver program is authorized by federal law, it seems likely it would establish specific provisions related to comprehensiveness of coverage, quality of care, and federal budget neutrality with which state programs would be required to comply. Requiring a workgroup to convene to design a program that is contingent on a hypothetical future change in federal law may not be the most efficient or effective use of members’ time and the State’s resources.

Again, I welcome engaging with this Committee and legislators on any ideas with the potential to improve the affordability of equitable and high-quality health care. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Meg Garratt-Reed
Executive Director, Office of Affordable Health Care