



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 2175
An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services
February 29, 2024

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial 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 2175, "An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas."

As health care costs continue to rise, the parts of Maine that are rural and already underserved by the health care industry are often the first to feel the worst impacts. This adverse impact is strikingly apparent when it comes to access to pharmacy services. People in every corner of our state have experienced added difficulties when trying to fill their prescriptions in recent years. This is due to retail pharmacy closures, restricted opening hours, and limited staffing. And these issues have impacted our rural and underserved communities to an even greater extent because folks in those areas have fewer options. When one pharmacy closes in a small town, that usually means that the next closest one is a long way away rather than down the street.

For many of these Mainers, Federally Qualified Health Centers are their only resource for accessing their medications when closures like this occur. Luckily these Centers provide quality, affordable care due to their access to drugs under the 340B Federal Drug Pricing Program. However, they are under increasing pressure from drug manufacturers that restrict where they can distribute those drugs. Between the overwhelming need for their services and the burdens placed on them by manufacturer restrictions, these Centers are often prevented from operating as intended and serving their purpose - to provide low cost health care to Mainers who otherwise would not have access to it.

This bill would take some of this pressure off by establishing a grant program to support these Centers so that they can develop or expand their capacity to deliver pharmacy services to their patients. The funds received from this program could improve the current system in a number of ways, including by enabling the Centers to develop or expand in-house pharmacy services, allowing them to hire critical pharmacy staff, and to expand their automated pharmacy systems. This would allow these pharmacies to both serve more patients and to also increase their coordination with a patient's larger care team, ensuring that folks using these Centers get the best care possible.

*State House (207) 287-1500 * Cell (207) 436-0763 * Fax (207) 287-5862 * Toll Free 1-800-423-6900 * TTY 711
SenatorJackson1@gmail.com * Web Site: legislature.maine.gov/senate*

Thank you for your time and attention. I urge you to pass this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions.