

131st Legislature
Senate
of Maine
Senate District 31

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Testimony of Senator Donna Bailey supporting
LD 2175, An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in
Underserved Areas
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
February 29, 2024

Representative Perry, and Esteemed Colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee, as you know, my name is Donna Bailey, and I proudly represent Senate District 31, which includes Buxton, Old Orchard Beach, and Saco. Today I am pleased to offer my testimony in strong support of LD 2175, “An Act to Improve Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas.”

As the Senate Chair of the HCIFS Committee, I am deeply committed, as we all are, to helping ensure that Mainers can access – and afford – their health care, including prescription drugs.

Recently, I have become more aware of the “pharmacy deserts” that are popping up in rural Maine communities, like Buxton in my district, and making it more difficult for Mainers to access their prescription drugs.

When large pharmacy chains decide to close a store in a rural community, it means that people might have to travel miles and miles to the next-closest store. At the end of last year, News Center Maine reported that patients in Guilford are driving an hour to the pharmacy now that the local Walgreens closed its doors.¹

LD 2175 is one solution to this growing crisis. It would establish a grant program, overseen by the Office of Affordable Health Care, to provide support for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to develop or expand their capacity to provide greater access to affordably priced drugs for their patients by increasing FQHCs ability to deliver pharmacy services to those patients.

I urge my colleagues to consider this proposal seriously so that we can provide immediate funding support for the FQHCs that provide access to pharmacy services – at a time when retail pharmacies are declining in number across rural Maine.

¹ [Towns in rural ME struggle with a lack of pharmacies | newscentermaine.com](https://www.newscentermaine.com/story/news/local/2023/02/28/towns-in-rural-me-struggle-with-a-lack-of-pharmacies/7031117002/)

Thank you for your time, I would be happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Bailey', with a long, sweeping underline.

Donna Bailey
State Senator, Senate District 31
Buxton, Old Orchard Beach, and Saco