

Joint Standing Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Room 228, State House, Augusta, Maine  
Wednesday, February 12th, 2025

Good Morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Dr. Emily Hill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to share my concerns regarding portions of LD210 that make cuts to Mainecare reimbursement for providers. First and foremost, I am a Mainer who grew up in Hermon. I studied political science and economics and then later went to medical school at University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine. I am now a physician committed to serving the people of Maine, as well as being a tax-paying professional living and working in this great state. My current role is chief resident in the last year of my family medicine residency in Lewiston. I care for a significant number of Mainecare patients. I have seen first hand the effects of the constraints of the healthcare system in Maine. As I relayed in an op-ed published in the Portland Press Herald last week, I am concerned that cuts to Mainecare will systematically harm the fragile healthcare system we already have.

I acknowledge the difficult choices you all have to make, especially given the tenuous federal funding environment. However I want to highlight today that these "savings" are ultimately costs - costs that are going to be shouldered by the hardworking Mainers who work in healthcare and most importantly, felt by the patients, many of whom are the poorest and sickest among us.

I cannot do my job in the clinic or the hospital unless I have appropriate staff, whether it's nurses, CNAs, or home health aides. Many Mainers are poor and sick, with advanced chronic disease states, high rates of comorbid conditions, all exacerbated by generational poverty and lack of access to care. The care that we are providing these days is borderline neglect. Implementing "savings" is further neglect of patients, healthcare workers and the system.

Patients cannot get or afford the inhalers or basic medications they need when they are short of breath. Their PCP closed up shop and they haven't seen a doctor in 5 years. They can't see the subspecialist they need because of lack of access. Forget about finding a counselor if you have Mainecare. A patient I cared for recently waited for five days in the hospital in Lewiston in order to get transferred to Maine Medical Center for a bed she desperately needed for a complication from an organ transplant. They can't go home from the hospital because home health does not cover their area. They can't die at their beloved home because of the constraints of home hospice. There are fewer and fewer places to go, fewer people to care for them be it doctors, nurses or aides.

When patients ask why, I have found myself having to explain to patients that the current federal administration, and now some of their very own state legislators, have made their healthcare a lot worse.

What incentive do I and my colleagues have to stay here, to serve the most underserved and sickest of our patients, if we are not compensated appropriately and competitively? If our patients can't get the medications they need? If we don't have the resources to appropriately provide care for our patients? I did not become a doctor to provide inadequate care. I am here to provide quality care for my patients, as well as care for my own family.

But there are answers.

Just like we collectively get together to share trails, waterways and land for recreation, we need to ensure that we are collectively contributing to the state-wide healthcare system so that *all* Mainers have access to what they need. Wealthy retirees will continue to buy condos in downtown Portland. Second home buyers will continue to come up to camp. And *all* Mainers will continue to get sick.

I am asking you to implement smart, progressive taxation policy so that those of us in healthcare can continue to stay here in Maine to care for our fellow Mainers in a safe and effective way.

I am gravely concerned that these cuts to the foundation of our already fragile healthcare grid here in Maine will cause more harm than good. This is not what anyone I have met or cared for wants - whether they are Republican, Democrat or independent. What might look like savings today are, in fact, huge costs tomorrow

Mainers - our friends, our neighbors, our family members, and even ourselves - will continue to get sick. We cannot simply write these facts out of reality. Those living with chronic diseases only get sicker. They will show up more frequently to hospitals. They will need home healthcare. They deserve to die well with the care of adequately staffed hospice agencies. All Mainers deserve these things. Let's find a way to provide it for them.

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

Sincerely,

Emily R. Hill, D.O.