

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

**Before the Joint Standing Committees on
Appropriations and Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services**

**“An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for
the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”**

February 26, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services. I am Meg Garratt-Reed, Executive Director of the Office of Affordable Health Care. I am here today to testify in support of the fiscal year 2026-2027 biennial budget bill, LD 210, specifically the initiative to provide funding for the Office to enter into a lease for office space which can be found on **page A-545** of the budget document.

The Office of Affordable Health Care

The Office of Affordable Health Care was created by the legislature in 2021, and directed to track and analyze health spending and costs in Maine, and to provide recommendations to policymakers to improve the affordability, quality, and efficiency of the state’s health care system. We are a lean operation, with a total of three staff and a current budget for annual “all other” spending of just under \$200,000. We utilize that “all other” funding primarily to fund collaborative work with the Maine Health Data Organization to fulfill our statutory duty to produce unbiased and evidence-driven analyses, and to respond to questions and requests from policymakers – work that is critical at a time when consumers, businesses, and the economy are increasingly struggling to bear the weight of high and rising health care costs. To date, staff have worked out of vacant desks in other Departments’ buildings to ensure that we can devote maximum resources to our programmatic impact, but it has become essential for the long-term stability of the Office to have a dedicated location. We developed the estimates of cost for this initiative in collaboration with the Bureau of General Services, based on their experience renting office space in the Augusta area. The request includes \$55,000 in one-time capital expenses for potential initial relocation expenses, and \$47,200 in annual “all other” expenditures for leased space. I hope that you will support this initiative to provide a stable foundation of operations for the Office of Affordable Health Care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.