



Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Advocating the right to quality,
affordable health care for all Mainers.

mainecahc.org

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February 26, 2025

**Testimony of Ann Woloson, Executive Director
Consumers for Affordable Health Care**

In support of

LD 210 "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"

**To the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and
on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Bailey, Representative Gattine, Representative Mathieson and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. I am Ann Woloson, Executive Director at Consumers for Affordable Health Care. I am here today to encourage you to support one time funding for operations expenses for the Office of Affordable Health Care (Page A545).

The Office of Affordable Health Care was created by the legislature in 2021. It is responsible for tracking and analyzing health spending in Maine and proposing solutions with the potential to reduce costs. The statute requires the office's duties be performed independently under the general policy direction of its legislative oversight committee and an advisory council. The office reports, at least annually to the Governor and its legislative oversight committee, and upon the request of its legislative oversight committee, on matters affecting the cost of healthcare in this State.

CAHC will soon release its updated healthcare affordability survey data that shows:

- Nearly half of Maine households have medical debt, and
- One of three Maine families have struggled to pay for necessities like food, heat or housing, due to medical expenses.

As health care costs continue to increase, those costs, as you very well know, must be grappled with by policy makers who often struggle to maintain or expand access to health coverage and healthcare in Maine. The need for analysis' and ongoing understanding of healthcare costs in Maine, why costs are increasing, and what might be done to address rising costs is ongoing. Issues arise frequently, that affect health care costs in Maine. Hospital system acquisition of local independent providers and related facility fees; the acquisition of one of Maine's nonprofit hospitals by a large out-of-state entity, for example, are issues that have recently come up that are likely causing or will cause costs to increase. The rising cost of prescription drugs in our state is another example of the ongoing and important need for independent review and recommendations that could address such costs.

We believe the independent nature, and the role of the Office of Affordable Health Care, in supporting and responding to requests from policy makers for information is important and of incredible value to the state of Maine and to the people of Maine. We urge you to support this small request for additional funding to support its work.

Thank you.