Mike Tipping
Senator, District 8

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator Ingwersen, Chair Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Mike Tipping, I represent Senate District 8 in Penobscot County and I'm proud to present **LD 1070 Resolve, to Study a Medicaid Forward Plan for Maine.**

This bill would direct the Office of Affordable Health Care, in consultation with stakeholders, to study the impact of implementing a "Medicaid Forward" plan by amending the MaineCare state plan to provide coverage for residents who are under 65 years of age, who have a household income exceeding 138% of the federal poverty level and who are not otherwise eligible for and enrolled in health care coverage.

In practice, the idea here is to study leveraging the state-federal Medicaid partnership to create a public universal health care plan for all Mainers.

In 2023, I presented a resolve to study some specific next steps necessary to move toward universal health care. That bill was passed by the HCIFS Committee, but the study was not funded. Last year, however, the Office of Affordable Health Care conducted a study of possibilities for a state public health insurance option.

This bill would build on that work, and work done in other states, to expand health care coverage through Medicaid. Last year, Oregon expanded Medicaid enrollment to 200% of the poverty level, following Minnesota, New York and Washington D.C. in expanding beyond the federal income levels.

Also last year, New Mexico launched a study of a Medicaid Forward plan, on which this legislation is based, and found expanding Medicaid coverage with a buy-in along a sliding scale, with each family's combined premiums and out-of-pocket spending not to exceed 5 percent of income, would cut that state's uninsured population by half, increase federal health care spending in the state by up to $2.4 billion and actually increase new state revenue over new state spending by up to $51 million.

That's right, we can cover more people while saving the state money.

Medicaid is a vital program. It already covers 400,000 Mainers and is especially important for funding long-term care for older Mainers here in the oldest state in the country. It's also incredibly efficient. Medicaid in Maine operates with 4.5% overhead while private insurers in the ACA marketplace are allowed 20% in administrative costs.

I don't need to tell this committee about the importance of Medicaid, or the current threats to the program at both the state and federal level. I believe we need to work now to strengthen MaineCare, make sure more Mainers have access to affordable care, and prevent needless suffering and death.

No one in Maine should be denied care because they can't afford it and no one should face bankruptcy or financial difficulty because they get injured or sick.

Thank you for your consideration and I'd be happy to answer any questions.