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IN SUPPORT OF LD 1018

An Act to Protect Health Care for Rural and Underserved Areas by Prohibiting Discrimination by Participants in a Federal Drug Discount Program

Good morning, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and esteemed members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services committee.

I am Representative Jack Ducharme. I have the honor of representing the towns of Madison, Norridgewock and Cornville in House District 71 in the legislature. I also serve on the board of directors of HealthReach Community Health Centers, a federally qualified healthcare system dedicated to serving the residents of rural Central and Western Maine. I am here today to express my strong support for LD 1018, "An Act To Protect Health Care For Rural And Underserved Areas By Prohibiting Discrimination By Participants In A Federal Drug Discount Program."

I am the former Chairman of the Board of HealthReach and 40-year patient of Madison Area Health Center, a HealthReach facility. HealthReach has 12 rural health centers located across central and western Maine. All our facilities, including Madison Area Health Center face unique challenges in delivering quality care to our community. Our health centers serve constituents from all walks of life, often throughout their entire lives. The patient population includes those seeking primary and preventative care, behavioral health specialists, and a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. Our patients are also comprised of individuals with limited financial means, chronic health conditions, and those residing in areas with scarce healthcare resources. Madison Area Health Center, a facility of HealthReach Community Health Centers, serves the whole patient, regardless of their financial means, health insurance status or ability to pay.

The 340B Federal Drug Discount Program, commonly known as the 340B program, has been instrumental in allowing all our health centers to stretch its limited resources and serve even more members of the community. By purchasing medications at discounted prices, we can reinvest the savings into essential services. For example, HealthReach utilizes 340B savings to provide free outreach services to our community members who need assistance navigating the often-confusing health care system. Savings have also supported

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medication management services and our Medical Assistant MA Trainee Program to develop our workforce.

However, hospitals and federally qualified health centers like Madison Area Health Center have encountered instances where pharmaceutical manufacturers have restricted our access to these discounted medications. Such actions jeopardize our ability to provide affordable medications and other services to our patients and undermine the intent of the 340B program. LD 1018 seeks to address this issue by prohibiting discriminatory practices by participants in this federal program, ensuring that entities like ours can continue to serve our communities without undue interference.

HealthReach, like other Maine Community Health Centers, is required to re-invest 340B savings into maintaining and expanding patient services to meet patient needs that our communities identify as local priorities. **It's important to emphasize that funding under 340B does not impact Maine taxes.** HealthReach supports several key services through its 340B savings re-investments:

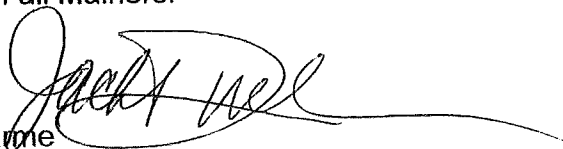
- Continual oversight and analysis of the 340B re-investment program, to ensure that urgent patient needs are met, while ensuring compliance requirements are met so we remain great fiscal stewards.
- Comprehensive coordinated care and triage throughout our health centers, assisting our community members with complex and emergent scenarios, such as their next steps and follow-through in primary care after discharge from a hospital. This work includes both facilitating medication refills between patients and their pharmacies of choice, and medication management services that support patient safety and positive health outcomes.
- Outreach services provided to our community members for FREE that help them to navigate a convoluted healthcare system, to identify and apply for other programs that help with the affordability of their care.

Supporting this legislation is not just about protecting a program; it's about safeguarding the health and well-being of thousands of Mainers who rely on rural health centers for their care. It's about ensuring that our healthcare providers can focus on what matters most: delivering compassionate, accessible, and affordable care to those who need it most. I know that health centers are already operating on shoestring budgets, without the savings from the 340B program, providing care to our rural populations would be even harder.

I urge you to consider the profound impact that LD 1018 will have on rural communities across our state. By passing this bill, you are not only protecting a vital healthcare program but also reinforcing your commitment to the health and prosperity of all Mainers.

Cordially,

Jack Ducharme



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