



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

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To the Joint Standing Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services

Testimony in Support of:

LD 1497, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Primary Care Reporting by the Maine Quality Forum and to Establish the Primary Care Advisory Council

April 22, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in support of LD 1497.

My name is Jakob Giron, a Policy Advocate at Consumers for Affordable Health. CAHC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable health care for every person in Maine. As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program, which operates a toll-free HelpLine. Our HelpLine fielded nearly 7,300 calls and emails this past year from people across Maine who needed help obtaining, keeping, using, or fixing problems with their private health insurance or with accessing or affording health care services. CAHC also serves as the Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare.

Access to primary care is known to reduce health disparities and is a critical determinant of overall health.¹ The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine define 'primary care' as "the provision of integrated, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing a large majority of personal health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, and practicing in the context of family and community." Research shows that patients who have access to this care are more likely to receive important preventative care, such as cancer screenings and vaccinations, providing them with better overall health outcomes.²

A recent report from the Milbank Memorial Fund shed light on the nationwide crisis of declining access to primary care and provided data showing a lack of increase in primary care providers in Maine over the last decade, despite the increasing demand.^{3,4} To address

¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0009.2005.00409.x>

² <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/access-primary-care#cit4>

³ <https://www.milbank.org/publications/the-health-of-us-primary-care-2024-scorecard-report-no-one-can-see-you-now/>

⁴ <https://www.milbank.org/primary-care-scorecard/>

this, LD 1497 aims to gather data on “key measures reflecting the status of primary care in the State,” which will be reported to this committee annually to provide further insight into the state of primary care in Maine. It also establishes an advisory council to assess the status of and identify specific actions to address gaps and improve function in our primary care system.

The composition of the advisory council, laid out in Section 3, part B of this bill, ensures input and representation from a diverse and comprehensive group of stakeholders. We support the inclusion of 2 council members representing consumers who must be appointed from a list provided by a statewide association that advocates for access to affordable health care. This ensures that those who receive care can participate and have a voice in the process of identifying healthcare issues and developing solutions.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote in favor of LD 1497 and thank the sponsor for bringing forward this bill.