

Good afternoon Senator Bailey and Representative Kristi Mathieson, and other members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.

I am Valere Dornan. I live in Hancock, Maine.

I support **LD 1883, An Act to Enact the All Maine Health Act.**

For 26 years I lived in England where we benefited from the National Health Service. We had routine preventive screenings. When there was illness in the family, the only concern was our health, and this was never compounded by financial questions. The medical care we received was outstanding. I am not saying this with rose tinted glasses: we knew this while we were living there. We fully endorsed tax money being used 100% directly for the people; all our medical care was free at the point of service.

**We paid far less for our health care than we would have here.**

We never worried about our health care if we lost our jobs; anyone can fall on hard times as the tenet 'there but for the grace of God go I' reminds us. Imagine being free to pursue a career path without the worries of healthcare coverage. Imagine the benefit to our economy where people are not stuck in the 'wrong' job. A society that establishes equitable, affordable, quality healthcare for everyone creates such a feeling of security and well-being that it confers dignity on all its people.

**The benefits of having a healthy population ripple through all aspects of that society, especially the economy.**

We need affordable and comprehensive healthcare for all Mainers. And I ask you to please consider the profound peace of mind that would come with it. I urge you to vote yes on **LD 1883, An Act to Enact the All Maine Health Act.**

Respectfully Submitted,

May 15, 2025

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In support of LD 1883 Valerie Dornan May 15, 2025

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I asked people currently living in England for their opinion of the National Health Service (NHS). While it is not perfect, there is a common theme running through everyone's comments: the NHS is universally valued. Not one person would be without it. Here are their answers.

It is still greatly appreciated and valued. I've recently had an ablation to cure atrial fibrillation and the service was excellent. Eighteen months ago I had knee replacement surgery- again, I couldn't fault the treatment and the result is that I am now completely mobile again and pain free.

I still really value the NHS, and am so thankful that we have it. Yes, I know it isn't nearly as quick as it used to be, but if you are patient it gets there, and we know that it is now dealing with many more types of treatment and masses more people. Not having to worry about being able to afford your medication or your treatment is fantastic, and the treatment you get, after the wait, is brilliant.

I feel so reassured that I can ring NHS service '111' at any time and have a friendly and informative chat with a nurse practitioner/doctor.

I am 86, and I would not be without the NHS. Everything is free at the point of delivery. If I feel ill, I can make an appointment online, and get a phone call, usually from my own named doctor, the same day. If he needs to examine me, he will call me round to the surgery (surgery is what they call the doctor's office in the UK), and is always patient and kindly.

You are correct that the NHS is still very much appreciated and valued. Wes Streeting is the Labour Health minister. Since Labour was elected in July waiting times have gone down. Wes says this is only the beginning.

For me, I have enough other things to give my attention and energy to, so having a health care system that is 'free at the point of use' is a relief even in its imperfect current state. In the past 4 years since my husband and I retired we have had the need to use the NHS for broken bones three times, for physiotherapy, for home social care, for osteoporosis monitoring, for vaccinations, for dementia diagnosis, for cataract removal, for glaucoma monitoring, for phone consultations and advice, for ongoing prescriptions and probably other things...thank goodness we don't have the faff of insurance, co-pays etc...it's all covered!!

My opinion is that for all its problems and certain failings it is amazing.

Definitely still appreciated and much valued by the vast majority.

It's actual service and how well it works does depend on which area you live in. I am very lucky as my GP practice is excellent (it is a large practice, well run and a training practice- so I can usually get an appointment quickly when needed.)

Also critical things are dealt with promptly and same for referrals although for some things it is not true - for example there is a real shortage of dermatologist, though if cancer is a possibility you still get seen by a specialist fairly quickly.

As you are probably aware one of the problems is us oldies and others who have to stay in hospitals because there is a lack of appropriate places to go until either you can go home or into some sort of care home.

So yes the nhs is absolutely still valued and wanted.

As for the NHS..all I can say is it's been amazing for myself and our family and we can't complain about it at all...

The NHS is very much appreciated and valued..

It is accessible to all regardless of socio-economic status and is free for all at the point of access. Sadly in recent years dentistry has become largely privatised, however they are still obliged to provide limited services such as emergency care, which as you can imagine is of great value to people from all walks of life. This has meant extremely long waiting lists for dental care (spanning years), and costly treatments, meaning not everyone can afford dental care.

**There are at times long waiting lists for non emergency care, however a nice analogy is that complaining about the wait times for non emergency NHS services is like complaining that your Rolls-Royce car doesn't go fast enough!**

From my own experience, the NHS has been amazing after having a pacemaker fitted, the process of which involved numerous tests, scans, consultations etc. (all for free - which would have cost hundreds of tens of pounds otherwise), and my understanding and gratitude of the NHS has improved - people might grumble at waiting times, but they saved my life for free!

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Fortunately my experience of the NHS is fairly limited.

However I do feel it has always been ready, including recently, to act promptly if anything has seemed remotely life threatening (possible cancer, stroke...) Appointments have come quickly and tests have been done promptly to eliminate nasties.

Less urgent things take longer now, like back pain or blood tests to narrow down the diagnosis by eliminating possible other non life threatening conditions.

Routine follow-ups seem variable.

My eye department is very good but other department letters arrive after a key date (but, so far, I have already been contacted by phone so it didn't matter but wasted resources) or in duplicate.

To my simple mind, the NHS now offers too much at the expense of what I would consider the basics (but I am sure all treatments are basic and absolutely essential to someone - so who should decide?).

I also can't help but feel that the admin has got over complicated, resources have been wasted by switching priorities too frequently to please the statisticians, so, not a permanent solution (which might be slower), just a sticking plaster [band aid]. Just to be clear though, I do still think it is good.

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The NHS has been absolutely wonderful for me - sorting out my 2 hips etc (list too long to itemise) and then of course the breast cancer which continues to pop up now and then not quite going away for good. There have been a few times when I think things could have been handled differently but overall I am so glad we have the NHS. I cannot imagine how much all my treatments would have come to if I was paying! And I'm still being helped as we speak.

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I believe the British system of healthcare is amazing. First of all, it is free at the point of entry. Anyone can go or be taken to an A&E (Accident and Emergency) department in any hospital and see a doctor, free of charge. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, if you are working or not. Everyone will get seen, assessed and treated or admitted in the hospital if needs be. People are seen according to their health predicament. It is not a first come, first served system. Someone with a minor condition, wound or symptom will have to wait. As soon as you arrive, a nurse assesses the gravity of the incident and puts the patient into the triage system. So sometimes, one has to wait two, three or even five hours because A&E departments are often busy. But, if you have an open wound, breathing or heart symptoms, you will jump the queue and most people understand and find that fair. Yes, the NHS needs more doctors, more

nurses, more beds in hospitals but it's still an amazing institution that should be available to everyone on our planet.

I wouldn't be without the NHS as we are extremely lucky to receive free healthcare, having a baby in the US I gather costs a lot whereas we are lucky to be able to choose a home birth or hospital birth and have the help you need on hand. Plus a midwife that comes to see you at home for the first few weeks. Our cervical screening is good and also breast screening program is extremely efficient. I did experience issues when I was looking after mum. I had a private nurse come in to help when I was at work as the carers the NHS offered would have not been the same carer coming each time. Urgent cases are given priority.

I am in my 80th year now and have always been under the care of the NHS. I have had several ops in my lifetime and can honestly say that my stays in hospital and follow up treatment has been exceptional. The only downfall is that in recent years there are now very few NHS dentists so most people have had to go private or not receive treatment! I feel that the health of children's teeth is going to suffer greatly from this lack.

I am a huge fan of our NHS with its principle of "free treatment at the point of need". It brings such peace of mind and comfort knowing that you don't have to even think about finding the cost. The NHS has saved my life at least 5 times!

Here are a couple of examples:-

2012 After a regular check up with my GP I was sent for tests for prostate. Was found to be developing aggressive prostate cancer which had not yet moved outside the prostate. I was sent to Kings College London where I was operated on by one of the country's top surgeons with a ground breaking micro surgery technique. I was out the next day and had all the follow up visits, including annual ones even now. The costs involved didn't seem to enter anyone's mind!

Just before Christmas 2021 I fell and broke my leg badly in a flooded field. I was rescued by the Fire Service and a local farmer's tractor and Air Ambulance and flown straight to Hereford Hospital where my leg was put back together through a long and complex operation including titanium rods and screws. (All under strict Covid restrictions!). I was out late on Christmas Eve. It took over 6 months in a splint boot, but now healed perfectly to all intents and purposes. There were regular checkups appointments.

2023: I developed kidney stones. After several months of ultrasound treatment which didn't work, I was operated on and all removed.

2024: Developed a sore throat that spread to glands and became septic. After GP's assessment concerns about sepsis, I was sent to Truro Hospital overnight with intensive infusions of antibiotics after which it soon cleared it up. Getting to see a doctor was a bit of a challenge. I had to go online to describe my symptoms. I was then directed to a pharmacist who diagnosed a sore throat and prescribed suitable medication. By next day I was in agony and neck very swollen. We contacted the GP surgery and I was sent to local emergency "hub" where I was seen by a nurse who immediately called in a doctor. I was sent straight away to Truro Hospital where I had to wait several hours before admission. A&E waiting times are excessive as service is overstretched! The staff and treatment were wonderful.

All this must have cost tens of thousands of pounds, always given without hesitation or worry. To have to haggle over the cost with insurance companies etc. would have added enormous stress to already extremely stressful situations!

Free prescriptions are available in England for pensioners, children, people on benefits and people with chronic illness. Others pay a fixed charge of £9.90 per item regardless of cost. Prescriptions are free to all in Scotland, Wales and N Ireland.

It is a wonderful institution which is greatly valued and appreciated. However in recent years it is under enormous pressure. A&E waiting times are sometimes appalling often due to "bed blocking", where elderly patients cannot find adequate care to enable them to be discharged. Waiting times to non urgent elective surgery like hip replacement may be well over a year, as are mental health and many non emergency services. NHS dentistry is particularly bad and in many areas it is impossible to get an NHS dentist. People who cannot afford private dentistry have very few options! Most people are determined that medical treatment should not go the same way.

People are immensely proud and value the NHS. My experience of it in an emergency I find hard to fault and I can't imagine what it would be like without it. Perhaps we take it too much for granted? Everyone is very concerned about the way it's going and the difficulty and delays in getting routine non urgent appointments. It is underfunded and under resourced and the pressures and demands are increasing but the NHS has been, and still is, in many instances, the best health system in the world.

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I have always had either good or excellent service from the nhs so have high regard for it... waiting times for appointments of any description can be endless...some blame goes back to COVID. That said it is still a service I relish.

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Although no system is perfect we wouldn't be without the NHS. My family has benefitted hugely, especially now that my husband and I are pensioners. He has had two knee replacements which has enabled him to continue to be active and stay healthy and pain-free, we have had free hearing and eye tests and both have had hearing aids provided by the NHS. This has improved our quality of life and enabled us to continue working part-time. Our son with learning disability gets annual health checks which would pick up any problems before they got worse. My elderly mother gets free prescription medicines to help with heart problems and reduce the risk of strokes. That this service is available to anyone who needs it, regardless of ability to pay, is wonderful.