

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

My name is Reeve Chace. I live in Portland. I have a master's degree in public health, and worked for MaineHealth and Maine Medical Center for 16 years, as a program manager for Let's Go! 5210 and later for the Center for Performance Improvement at MaineHealth, which aimed to increase the quality of care at all MaineHealth hospitals. I could talk to you about bureaucratic waste and the frustration and burnout I saw in the doctors and nurses I worked with, but I know you have heard stories like that already. What I want to talk about is the moment when I *really* realized our healthcare system was broken.

Twelve years ago, when my youngest daughter was still in preschool, her teacher—who was in her early 30s—was diagnosed with breast cancer. ~~This young woman, who had dedicated her life to helping raise the next generation of children, was sick.~~ And to help her, we—the parents at the daycare center—were asked to help offset some of the costs of her treatment by bringing in our old cans and bottles, worth, as you know, 5 or 10 cents each. On the surface, this sounds like an easy and helpful way to rally around a community member in need—fill up a Clynk bag and drop it off. But think about it—we were being asked, in the United States of America, to collect cans and bottles—actual garbage—to help pay for cancer treatment for a 30-year old teacher. How is this so normalized? Shouldn't there be a better mechanism in place to ensure that everyone who needs treatment will get it? That it will be paid for, and ~~That~~ figuring out how to pay for it won't cause even more stress than the illness itself?

We—as Americans and as Mainers—can do better than this. Let's start right here in Maine with the All Maine Health Act. Let's model a universal health plan for the rest of the country. Let's show them that Maine really IS the way life should be—with universal health care guaranteed for all.