

My name is Mae. I am a citizen of Maine, and a constituent of the legislators with us here today.

In the time I've lived here in Maine, the most outstanding quality I have witnessed in the state is its strong sense of community. Everywhere I go, I see people urging others to buy local; to support local farmers, fishers, and artisans; and to help protect and preserve the local ecosystem. And in every store, goods from other businesses on the shelves; everyone trying to lift up their neighbors, and help each other succeed.

The legislation being discussed today presents a unique and meaningful opportunity for us as a state, to lift up all of our neighbors, to make a massive impact for the wellbeing of our community.

Tens of thousands of Mainers do not have access to health insurance. The percentage of those without coverage is even higher for those in rural areas, those without college degrees, blue collar workers. And that's only those without any coverage at all. How many people do you know who are insured, but have had their claim denied? How many people do you know with insurance that have been over charged, even gone into debt, had their lives upended because of medical costs that the insurance they pay for would not cover?

Maine AllCare would cut out an unnecessary middle man in the form of private insurance companies which make their profit by denying as much care as possible. By doing everything in their power to keep us from getting the care we pay for, they siphon wealth out of our local economy, from hardworking Mainers, into the pockets of billionaires.

Imagine the alternative? Imagine a system built by us, designed to work for us, to ensure we all get the care we need. Imagine the growth we'd see in our local economy, the wealth that would stay here in Maine when we're no longer being extorted by price gouging billionaires?

In most developed nations, the idea of being crippled by medical debt is a thing of the past. And yet, it's something we subject our own citizens to every day. When injustice or hardship befalls our people, it is the duty of our government to protect them, to serve them. It's why we pay taxes, why we elect representatives. When our federal government refuses to stand up for our people, we cannot simply wait for them to do better. We need to act, to make the changes we want to see here at home, in the great state of Maine. And we have the opportunity to do that today, to bring our people into the modern day, where we no longer have to worry about losing our livelihoods just because we got sick.

Maine has long upheld a reputation of leadership. The state's motto, *dirigo*; as we all know, means "I lead." This bill offers us a chance to lead the nation in providing quality, affordable care to all of our citizens. In a country founded on the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; we can lead the nation in making the first of those ideals a guarantee.

Thank you.