Cameron Reny
Senator, District 13

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Cameron Reny
LD 2151, "An Act to Improve Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas"

Hello Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and other esteemed members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services. I am Cameron Reny and I serve as the senator for District 13 which is all of Lincoln County and the towns of Windsor and Washington. I am here today to present LD 2151, "An Act to Improve Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved Areas."

It is an unfortunate reality that many Mainers suffer from a shortage of access to affordable medications. Over the past several years, Maine has seen a steep decline in the number of retail pharmacies, particularly in rural counties. Many pharmacies have closed their doors altogether, while others have reduced hours due to workforce shortages and financial pressures, leaving many Mainers struggling to access pharmacy services in their communities. In most Maine counties, more than 50% of residents now live in a pharmacy desert. **In Washington and Waldo counties, that number is 100%.** This lack of access poses a real and immediate threat to public health. When Mainers cannot fill their prescriptions locally — especially for chronic or life-threatening conditions — their health outcomes worsen, emergency visits increase, and preventable hospitalizations rise.

LD 2151 addresses the critical shortage of access to affordable medications that Mainers are facing — particularly in rural and underserved communities served by Federally Qualified Health Centers, or FQHCs. Maine's FQHCs, also known as community health centers, provide high-quality, accessible primary and preventive care to more than 200,000 Maine people across more than 100 service delivery sites statewide. Together, these FQHCs form the largest independent primary care network in Maine and serve as the backbone of the healthcare safety net.

This bill provides a focused and fiscally responsible solution. The bill would allocate $4 million in one-time funding to establish a grant program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Under this program, Maine's community health centers would apply for funding to develop, or expand, in-house pharmacy capacity — a proven way to ensure patients can obtain affordable medications directly where they receive their care.

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Because it costs roughly $750,000 to stand up one in-house pharmacy, this funding level would allow for the creation or expansion of several strategically located pharmacies across the state. Additionally, some health centers may look at mobile pharmacies, or other options to increase pharmacy access in their area in a way that works best for the community they serve. DHHS would evaluate each application to ensure that resources are allocated in an efficient and impactful manner.

This legislation meets the emergency threshold. The continued loss of pharmacy access represents an immediate danger to public health in Maine's rural and underserved areas. Without timely intervention, more residents will lose access to life-saving medications, deepening existing health disparities, and straining the broader healthcare system.

LD 2151 is a practical, very bipartisan, and urgently needed investment in Maine's rural health infrastructure. It empowers trusted local providers — our community health centers — to fill the gaps left by the market and to ensure that all Mainers, regardless of where they live, can obtain the medications they depend on.

Thank you.

Cameron Reny
Senate District 13
In Lincoln County: Alna; Boothbay; Boothbay Harbor; Bremen; Bristol; Damariscotta; Edgecomb; Hibberts Gore; Jefferson; Louds Island UT; Monhegan Plantation; Newcastle; Nobleboro; Somerville; South Bristol; Southport; Waldoboro; Westport Island; Whitefield; and Wiscasset.