



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony
In Support of

LD 331 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Ensure Timely Reimbursement Under MaineCare Regarding Hospital Cost Reports

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am representative Gary Drinkwater, proudly representing the good folks of District 27. I am here today to advocate for funding for LD 331, which directs the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure timely reimbursement under MaineCare regarding hospital costs reports.

When this bill was initially reported out of committee, it received an *ought not to pass*. In the house to was reported out *ought not to pass*. Despite that, I want to personally thank the senators in this room who supported the minority report and voted in favor, 29 to 5. I also want to recognize the members of the house who reconsidered their positions and ultimately voted *ought to pass* by an unanimous 145 to 0. That level of bipartisan support sends a strong and clear message.

As a representative of a rural district, I have both heard and witnessed firsthand the challenges facing our healthcare system. In my area, the wait-time to see an optometrist exceeds 8 months. To see an ear, nose, and throat specialist, if you can even find one, the wait can stretch to 12 months. These delays are not abstract numbers; they represent real people who are waiting for care. We all know that Maine's healthcare system is under strain. Ensuring that hospitals are paid in a timely manner will not solve every problem, but it is a critical and practical step forward. Hospitals cannot continue to operate efficiently if reimbursements are delayed. Last week, during a meeting with hospital representatives, one hospital spoke plainly; They are running out of cash. They told us they were owed 50 million in state money that has been outstanding for months, and they are simply asking to be paid what they are already due.

We are currently looking at a reported surplus of 248 million. LD 331 includes a one time general fund appropriation of approximately 51 million to implement MaineCare reimbursement at 75%. If there was ever an issue that should unite us, it is access to medical care for our citizens.

In my caucus, I have had conversations with members who strongly support paying our hospitals promptly. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle demonstrated that same commitment with their unanimous 145 to 0 vote. With a surplus of this magnitude, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility to act together.

Let's not allow this bill to stall at the appropriations table. Our aging population depends on local hospitals, physicians, and specialists. Rural Maine needs stability in its health care system. Timely reimbursement is not a partisan issue, it is a practical solution that supports patients, providers, and communities alike.

I respectfully ask for your support in funding LD 331. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Drinkwater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "D".

Gary Drinkwater
State Representative