

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Darcy Shargo on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
March 5, 2026

Neither for nor Against:
**LD 2196 “An Act to Lower Health Insurance Costs, Reduce Barriers to Health Care and Ensure Fair
Prices for Health Care”**
Sponsored by Representative Gattine

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Darcy Shargo, Chief Executive Officer at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

MPCA is a membership organization that represents Maine’s Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine’s CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality and accessible primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 100 service delivery sites in all 16 Maine counties.

We would like to thank Representative Gattine and cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward. While MPCA is testifying neither for nor against, we are encouraged by the recognition that a system change is needed. The rising cost of healthcare has led to a massive increase in premiums with costs falling on Mainers already struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living. We know that both consumers and employers (such as our member health centers) feel this pinch. However, this bill lacks a clear roadmap for targeted and committed investment of any costs saved by proposed price caps, making it unclear whether it will actually strengthen Maine’s healthcare infrastructure.

We would be remiss not to recognize the important role that hospitals play in our healthcare infrastructure in Maine and we do not want to see them fail. Hospitals are an important part of the healthcare ecosystem just as Community Health Centers are, and the bill as drafted may be too much, too quick, and could lead to decreased quality of care and poor health outcomes. A move like this requires a detailed and step-wise plan for success, *especially* in light of federal action through HR 1.

To put a fine point on it, the overarching reason we are not supporting this bill is that it does not clearly center Maine’s primary care network—the backbone of which is community health centers—as part of the solution to the health care affordability crisis. It is only primary care that has a proven savings to the system; in fact, Maine’s CHCs lower overall health care costs, returning \$1.60 for every dollar spent. CHCs improve the health of their patients and communities, and they generate economic opportunities in the communities they serve. Primary care providers keep patients out of hospitals by focusing on proactive, patient centered care that prevents, manages, and assists in the early detection of health issues. It is our belief that the state should instead be focused on making commitments to expanding access and making immediate, targeted, and meaningful investments in primary care, because the chronic under- investment in preventive and primary care forces people to rely on hospitals, leading to increased cost for patients all over the state, especially those in rural and medically underserved areas.



On behalf of Maine's Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at dshargo@mepca.org with any follow-up questions.

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