

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of LD 1515 and LD 1701 Thursday, May 4, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Sarah Calder, Senior Government Affairs Director at MaineHealth, and I am here to support both LD 1515 and LD 1701.

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Every day, our over 22,000 care team members support our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America” by providing a range of services from primary and specialty physician services to a continuum of behavioral health care services, community and tertiary hospital care, home health care and a lab.

MaineHealth also operates three ambulance services across our service area, including PACE Paramedic Service in Norway, NorthStar Ambulance Service in Farmington, and the Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital neonatal transport system. Since 2019, calls to both PACE and NorthStar have increased by upwards of 33%. At the same time, the losses sustained by both services have also dramatically increased. PACE’s operating margin in Fiscal Year 2022 was -25%. NorthStar’s was over -9% and is on track to be almost -15% this year, and because of these losses the reliance on town subsidies has increased by over 25% since 2018. This is simply not sustainable for MaineHealth or the local towns.

As you have heard today, we are not alone. In addition to delays responding to emergency calls, the strained system is also failing to adequately accommodate inter-facility transports (transporting patients from the hospital to another hospital or from the hospital to a long-term care facility). And these delays in transports are resulting in patients staying longer in the hospital than they need to, which contributes to back-ups in our Emergency Departments and hospital beds.

The inability to transfer patients in MaineHealth hospitals has become so severe, we have been forced to stand up our own inter-facility transport system by pulling NorthStar staff and rigs to provide inter-facility and medical transports for our patients. Just in November and December,

NorthStar made 278 transports from Maine Medical Center, Mid-Coast-Parkview Health, Pen Bay Medical Center, and Waldo County General Hospital. To be clear, we first contacted local EMS to request these transports, but they were unable to accommodate the request.

We also believe that reforms are needed to build a sustainable EMS system, and it is for that reason we support continuing the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission and would welcome the opportunity to participate.

The past three years have thrown unimaginable hurdles at our hospitals and our care team members – a pandemic, a behavioral health, long-term care, and workforce crisis, and a failing EMS system. In the face of each of those challenges, we have done our best to respond with innovative solutions – many of which have come with significant investments – but we can't continue to shoulder the burden of a failing system alone. We need your support. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1515 and LD 1701.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.