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Testimony of the Maine Osteopathic Association
Before the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee

In Reference to:

LD 274, Resolve, Directing the Maine Health Data Organization To Determine the Best Methods and Definitions To Use in Collecting Data To Better Understand Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Provision of Health Care in Maine

Public Hearing: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 11:00 AM, Cross Building, Room 220 (Virtual)

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

My name is Lisa Gouldsbrough, DO. I am board certified in Pediatrics and I practice in Kennebunk, ME. As a Past President of the Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) and the Chair of the MOA's Task Force on Equity, I am pleased to provide written testimony on behalf of my physician colleagues in support of **LD 274, Resolve, Directing the Maine Health Data Organization To Determine the Best Methods and Definitions To Use in Collecting Data To Better Understand Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Provision of Health Care in Maine.**

The Maine Osteopathic Association is a professional organization representing approximately 400 osteopathic physicians and an additional 700+ residents and students. Our mission is to "serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State."

This resolve directs the Maine Health Data Organization to determine the best methods and definitions to use in collecting data to assist in analyzing the origins of racial and ethnic disparities in health care in the State and to submit a report with suggested legislation by October 1, 2021 to the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, which may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature.

We believe this is an important step to correcting the inequities in our healthcare system in Maine. In June 2020, the MOA Board of Directors formed a Task Force to examine the role of systemic racism in Maine's healthcare system, and in particular to find ways to work towards a more diverse and inclusive physician workforce. Much of the Task Force's work thus far has centered on physician education, but it should be noted that we have attempted to collect data on the racial and ethnic demographics of the healthcare workforce in Maine and examine whether or not this is representative

of patient populations. We've found that this data is hard to come by and would argue that examining the healthcare workforce makeup can and should be an important aspect of this data collection.

We also recognize that true disparities in our healthcare delivery system in Maine exist. In our initial statement of the Task Force's formation, we recognized that "As of June 9th, according to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Black Mainers accounted for 24 percent of total cases of COVID-19 in which racial data was disclosed. That rate is grossly disproportionate to the population of Black and African American people living in Maine, which stands at 1%."

The Osteopathic approach reminds us that our bodies and ourselves are interlinked; the health of our patients is related to the health of our communities. We cannot improve the health of individuals and communities without a commitment to respect and value every individual regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin tone, socioeconomic status, political persuasion or abilities.

In order to recognize and correct any similar inequities in healthcare, we need adequate data. Therefore, we fully support this effort to collect and examine data on racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare in Maine.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@mainedo.org if you have any questions. Thank you.