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Testimony of Rep. Anne Perry Introducing:
LD 541 “An Act To Improve Health Care Data Analysis”
March 9, 2021

Good afternoon, Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. I am Rep. Anne Perry and I represent nine communities in Washington County. I am here to introduce LD 541, “An Act To Improve Health Care Data Analysis.”

The idea for this bill started with my work on the Taskforce for Healthcare for All Mainers. As we make decisions on how to affect the cost and appropriateness of healthcare, it is important that we know that these decisions are based in measurable results.

We need to have a good way to look at why we are making a given healthcare decision and what are we trying to achieve by it. Good, accurate data will make these decisions easier. This bill will allow us to better access, analyze and utilize the available healthcare data. It will provide us with the opportunity to look at trends in Maine related to healthcare costs and delivery. This will give us, as policy makers, the ability to determine that our decisions are bringing about the results we intended and to be able to change course early if it is not working as planned or creating problems in some other part of the system.

With the help of the State Health Access Data Assistance Center, I started doing some research on what other states do, including Minnesota, Maryland, Oregon and Vermont. I found that the states with well-established departments had a large staff. For Maine, this approach would not do.

However, Maine has a wealth of statewide data that if put together could work for us and help us make better decisions as policymakers.

This bill was introduced in the 129th legislature and was passed out of this committee, but did not make it through the full legislative process due to early adjournment. During the committee deliberations, I was able to work with Karynlee Harrington from the Maine Health Data Organization (MHDO), and Commissioner Lambrew, Michelle Probert (Mainecare) and Dr. Laterneau from the Department of Health and Human Services.

LD 541 is the result of those efforts and is the bill as was amended by HCIFS last session. It is a small start but I feel has great potential to work for the health and welfare of the people of this State.

What does this bill do? It designates that MHDO serves as the as the holder of Maine's healthcare data and has the responsibility for oversight and reporting of public health activities and defines emergency visits due to substance use and cancer and vital statistics data. The bill also strictly protects the privacy of the data collected.

LD 541 creates a Health Information Trend Advisory Committee. This Committee will recommend priorities and provide annual public health reporting. It also creates a statewide provider and service location data base.

This is a small but significant step towards making policy decisions that are backed by data and the ability to measure the results.

Thank you very much for your consideration.