



The Honorable Heather Sanborn
The Honorable Denise Tepler
Chairs, Joint Committee On Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Chairwomen:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the LD 1196 Stakeholder Group. I was honored to chair the stakeholder group process and wanted to make a few comments that I hope you will take into consideration.

I don't think anyone in the stakeholder group or on this committee disputes the importance of primary care and behavioral health. They are critical elements of the health care we provide in this state and clearly benefit the people of Maine. The report does a nice job outlining many of the benefits of primary care and behavioral health, so I won't belabor this point.

That said, health care is complicated and it's always difficult to figure out how to best allocated resources and control escalating costs. Our hospitals have been especially challenged during the pandemic and are worried about making end meet. At the same time, payers are concerned about rising costs, and primary care and behavioral health providers are struggling to deliver the care that Mainers need and deserve. Bottom line is, this is not going to be easy.

But, times are changing and whether or not we agree on what next steps to take, we all need to think about the value and cost of health care in the future. Here in Maine, the conversation has started and that's a very good sign. To carry this conversation forward, my recommendation after serving as chair of this stakeholder process is to commit to some basic first steps. This would include the need to:

- Agree on terminology re: the definition of primary care and behavioral health to ensure a shared language and understanding
- Identify how we measure primary care and behavioral health services (quality, cost, growth, etc.)
- Gather, analyze, and report data on these measurements
- Create a fair and equitable process for reviewing and responding to the data while assigning oversight and accountability for the work. This could be in the form of a permitting this committee to report out bills based on the findings of the MHDO/MQF annual report or the work of the Office of Affordability in Healthcare.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Wilson, MD, MPH, MS-HPed
Board of Directors
Maine Medical Association