



# Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Advocating the right to quality, affordable  
health care for all Mainers.

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## Testimony in support of LD 1196

### An Act Regarding Targets for Health Plan Investments in Primary Care and Behavioral Health

**Ann Woloson, Executive Director, Consumers for Affordable Health Care**

**April 15, 2021**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. I am Ann Woloson, Executive Director of Consumers for Affordable Health Care. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1196, An Act Regarding Targets for Health Plan Investments in Primary Care and Behavioral Health.

Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with the mission of improving access to affordable, quality health care for all Maine people. CAHC supports policy initiatives that improve access to affordable health care and that can help to reduce overall health care costs.

An article published by the Journal of American Medical Association Network contemplates whether increasing primary care spending alone will save money.<sup>1</sup> The article specifies that primary care, defined as core functions that patients receive from their usual source of care, is an essential component of health care and is associated with better-quality care, patient experience, and outcomes including lower mortality and that observational studies have also linked primary care to lower levels of spending.

A white paper by the American Academy of Family Practitioners indicates that nations with greater investment in primary care reported better patient outcomes and lower health care costs<sup>2</sup> and that while significant variation in primary care investment exists within the states, states with higher levels of investment (in primary care) also report better patient outcomes.<sup>3</sup> This same research suggests that in addition to better health outcomes, the supply of primary care physicians was associated with lower total costs of health services. Areas with higher ratios of primary care physicians to population had much lower total health care costs than did other areas, possibly partly because of better preventive care and lower hospitalization rates.<sup>4</sup>

While CAHC's mission references affordable health care, it also is focused on quality care. We believe that improved and timely access to quality primary and behavioral health care will benefit Mainers and improve health outcomes and will also help to reduce overall health care costs over time.

We understand Maine DHHS is currently leading a series of initiatives aimed at improving access to effective primary care services through MaineCare. We hope the final version of this bill does not disrupt but instead builds upon those efforts. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup>Zirui Song, MD, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>; Suhas Gondi, BA, Will Increasing Primary Care Spending Alone Save Money?, JAMA Network; August 15, 2019, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2748667>

<sup>2</sup> Shi L. (2012). "The Impact of Primary Care: A Focused Review." Scientifica (Cairo). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24278694/>.

<sup>3</sup>Reid R, Damberg C, Friedberg MW. (2019). "Primary Care Spending in the Fee-for-Service Medicare Population." JAMA, Intern Med., <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2730351>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid