

Testimony in Favor of LD 1196

For too long, our health care industry has been incented to provide more medicine, but what we need is a system that promotes better health. Health care systems that invest in a robust primary care workforce have been consistently shown to provide better health care outcomes at lower cost.

I have been fortunate to be able to work in the same practice at Martin's Point in Portland for over 27 years, I have learned about the value that well supported primary care can provide to my patients. There are four components to effective primary care. We call them the 4 C's. You have First Contact accessibility, the place to call and be seen when you have a problem. Second is Comprehensive Care, the ability to provide quality care for the vast spectrum of the usual problems our patients face. Family doctors can manage about 85% of all the problems that come through their doors Third is Continuity of Care over time. It is much easier to take care of someone if you know their history and that of their family. Fourth is Care coordination with other specialists and services.

I want to share with you my experience with one of my favorite long time patients and her family. I have been privileged to care for four generations of this family, and I have been able to provide these four cardinal components of primary care.

Jane, (I have changed her name for privacy issues) came from a generation that dressed up to go to the doctor. Though in her 80's and in frail health, she never failed to show up to the office in a fashionable dress and heels with open toes, even when she could barely walk. I always made it a point to compliment her on her pedicure, and she was pleased that I noticed. Over twenty years she came to see me, I managed her diabetes and COPD. When her son came to me with shortness of breath, I diagnosed atrial fibrillation, an abnormal heart rhythm, treated it, and coordinated care with his cardiologist. Another family member struggled with alcohol, and I treated her repeatedly over the years with medicine to prevent relapse and convinced her to go to substance counseling. A granddaughter had depression, which I treated and helped her get better. When the granddaughter became pregnant, I provided prenatal care and delivered baby Benjamin. It has been a joy to watch that child grow.

But about a year after Ben was born, Jane, now in her late 80's, had a stroke. Sadly, I helped coordinate with hospice team that provided her end of life care.

I have been able to provide care to this family and the rest of my patients with a lot of support from my staff and the robust investment in primary care that Martin's Point has provided.

I doubt that I will still be practicing when the fifth generation of this family appears. It is imperative that we invest now so that the next generation of primary providers can thrive. By doing so, we can ensure better health for Jane's family and all Mainers.

I urge you to vote yes on LD 1196.

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