

Good morning Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Valerie Dornan, I live in Hancock, and I'm testifying today in support of LD 1045, The Maine Health Care Act.

President Obama said one of the biggest motivators for him to strive for healthcare accessible to everyone was witnessing his grandmother's deprivation. This is my mother's story.

We were living in Europe. Our family had access to universal healthcare, very affordable, and outstanding. The contrast between the healthcare we experienced and that which my mother experienced, back here, was **stark**. We went to the doctor **whenever we felt unwell**. My mother **never went to the doctor**. This came to a head when she was rushed to the ER with a broken hip, having lain for goodness knows how long, in the snow, before her neighbors found her; she by then had contracted pneumonia. She was in ICU. She had never been able to afford health insurance. She had no relationship with any healthcare professionals. Her hip was repaired and she progressed out of ICU. My sister and I were by her bedside by day. At night we worked on arrangements for her recovery. Then a phone call came at 6 am telling us our mother had just died: total, avoidable tragedy. When I asked the nurse who called why we had not been told our mother was dying, she said that all her vital statistics were fine and they did not know she was dying. Our mother had no confidence in a healthcare system she never had access to. She dealt with this crisis the same way she had dealt with all her health problems: **alone**. She could not relate to the medical staff. She was afraid of the technology. She was overwhelmed in her terror and she lost the will to live. Ever since, I have grieved for my mother and the inhumanity of her healthcare deprivation.

Under the Universal Healthcare system of LD 1045 she would have had a Primary Care Physician who would have been her doctor. She would have had annual check ups. Instead, by the time she was eligible for Medicare, going to the doctor was as alien to her as it would be to a Martian. She was never prescribed Calcium and Vitamin D for her bones. She never turned to her doctor to help her with her respiratory problems. She self diagnosed emphysema and self-medicated with over the counter drugs for asthma. (On a previous ER visit she was prescribed oxygen. But she felt she could not afford it. With Universal Healthcare people would not have to weigh up cost versus treatment. She would have been provided with oxygen, end of story. She would have had help with her intestinal problems,) I could go on.

(When we were going through her papers after she died, we found that she had paid for Health Insurance, for a short while. Obviously she wanted health insurance. Also obviously, she felt she could not afford it. So she led an entire life of not going to the doctor. Her life could have been so different: she could have had worry-free access to medical care and lived a much healthier and happier life.)

President Obama's grandmother and my mother are not the only ones.

Just this past weekend I heard these stories:

- i) the nurse whose job was to advise people over the telephone. Her script was dictated by a chart and in her own words she told me that unless she had to tell the person to go to the ER immediately, all the messaging was geared to **delay** any treatment for as long as possible. She could not cope with such a disservice to sick people and she quit her job.
- ii) the husband scrambling to find \$ 6,000 because his wife needs treatment for her brain tumor
- iii) the man who said, 'my parents have wanted Universal Healthcare all their lives'
- iv) another man who said, 'With Universal HealthCare my employees would automatically have health insurance. I would love to provide health insurance for them, but I just can't afford it.'
- v) the mother who recently moved here from California and whose deductibles on her Obama Care Plan, for her daughter's treatment, have skyrocketed and forced her to accrue massive credit card debt.

Please try to put yourself in the shoes of all the people in our state who have inadequate access to healthcare and their misery, and let this help you understand why we need to enact LD 1045, The Maine Health Care Act, that establishes a plan to provide universal, publicly funded health care, with real opportunity for controlling costs, to provide universal health care coverage to all residents of this State. I urge you to pass LD 1045. I am sure that everyone present does not want anyone to fall through the cracks and we would all be so proud if Maine were to lead the way to a healthcare system that genuinely looks after everyone.

Respectfully,

Valerie Dornan
Hancock, Maine