



Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 1045: "An Act To Support Universal Health Care"

May 12th, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Jobs Council. The Maine Jobs Council is a new, statewide, nonpartisan, member-driven advocacy organization that advances public policies to support the creation and preservation of foundational jobs in Maine. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1045.

We oppose such legislation because it is antithetical to our mission advocating for economic prosperity by promoting the growth and maintenance of foundational jobs. If passed, LD 1045 would be an incredibly expensive program to create. It could increase costs and burdens on employers, continue to make Maine an outlier in New England, and keep making Maine less attractive to investment, innovation, and foundational job growth. Maine would be the only state with universal care, something that has repeatedly failed elsewhere.

As the only state in the nation with universal healthcare, Maine would be an even greater outlier than we already are. Given that Maine ranks [#46 for business environment](#) and [#36 for economic strength](#), both lowest in the region, we're in no position to be even more expensive, complicated, and unwelcoming to jobs, innovation, and investment. We should be focusing on addressing legislation that helps lower our healthcare costs and makes Maine more competitive.

Adding complexity to our healthcare system is not the solution to solving our state's economic problems or workforce crisis. We have the lowest economic rankings in the region. We have the [6th highest energy cost](#), the [4th highest healthcare cost](#), the [4th highest tax burden](#), and [our weekly wage is \\$966](#), tied with Wyoming for 11th lowest. We need to start taking a more comprehensive look at how increased costs, regulations, infrastructure, workforce challenges, and other issues act as a barrier to job creation in our state. Maine needs to develop and follow a long term strategic plan that makes us more competitive and keeps jobs in Maine.

In order to solve the pending workforce crisis in Maine, we need to be more attractive as a state to investment. In 2020, Maine ranked [#45 for venture capital funding](#), lowest in the region. Passing the most complex healthcare reform in the country would not do that. Over the next 5 years, Maine's retiring workforce will leave [158,000 open jobs](#). In order for our state's economy and tax base to grow, we should be passing legislation that fits into Governor Mills 10 Year Economic Plan to add 75,000 people to Maine's talent pool. This legislation would not do that.

Maine consumers continue to pay among the highest amounts for health coverage in the nation. Eliminating the private insurance system and establishing a new government apparatus to manage health care is untested, an enormous risk, and fails to look comprehensively at allocation of state resources within a broader strategic plan to improve our economy and way of life.

Thank you.

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