

# MaineHealth

## MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community  
Health Network  
LincolnHealth  
MaineHealth Care At Home  
Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
Memorial Hospital  
Maine Medical Center  
Mid Coast-Parkview Health  
NorDx  
Pen Bay Medical Center  
Southern Maine Health Care  
Waldo County General Hospital  
Western Maine Health

## Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable  
Care Organization

## MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health  
New England Rehabilitation  
Hospital of Portland  
St. Mary's Health System

## Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of LD 2140, “An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact” Tuesday, February 6, 2023

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Sarah Calder, Senior Government Affairs Director at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 2140, “An Act to Enact the Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Every day, our over 23,000 care team members support our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America” by providing a range of services from primary and specialty physician services to a continuum of behavioral health care services, community and tertiary hospital care, home health care and a lab.

Like health care systems across the country, MaineHealth is facing significant workforce shortages despite making historic investments to recruit and retain current care team members. In fact, MaineHealth has increased wages for non-executives and non-physicians six times since 2021, totaling \$291 million. Even with those investments and other creative and innovative efforts to recruit and “grow our own,” we are still challenged with over 2,200 open positions, not including physicians.

One area in particular that we are experiencing a significant shortage is in social work. MaineHealth is currently recruiting for approximately 75 social workers. These positions are open, on average, for 191 days or over half a year before a candidate is hired.

Social workers play a key role in helping individuals to cope and overcome many complex and unique challenges so they can live healthy and productive lives. Social workers assist individuals with a wide variety of challenges such as medical and psychiatric issues, addiction challenges, developmental disabilities, as well as complex psychosocial issues such as homelessness, unemployment, and financial challenges. Licensed clinical social workers play a critical role in the behavioral health continuum both in the outpatient (community setting) and at the most intensive levels of care, like Spring Harbor Hospital. Outpatient, Hospital, and Emergency Department Social Workers are a tremendous asset, providing individuals

and our community with much needed care, therapeutic treatment, and intervention.

As you know, the pandemic exacerbated a pre-existing crisis in Maine's behavioral health system. Without sufficient access to community behavioral health services, like social work and therapy, a greater demand is placed on more intensive levels of care. In fact, every day people with behavioral health needs, particularly children, languish in hospital Emergency Departments for days and weeks, and many community-based services maintain long waiting lists or are simply non-existent. Just in the past year at MaineHealth, 357 children and adolescents languished in MaineHealth Emergency Departments for an average of over 5 days awaiting appropriate services.

The legislation before you today could help ease the challenges related to transferring licensure to Maine as we work to recruit out-of-state health care professionals to meet our growing need. The workforce shortage and behavioral health crisis are significant, and we look forward to working with you this Session to advance policy changes, like LD 2140, that attract and retain individuals to meet the increased workforce demands and also increase access to behavioral health services for our vulnerable community members who struggle with mental health needs.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.