



**Testimony of Jena Jones on Behalf of  
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on  
Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial  
Services**

**In Favor of LD 2175 – An Act to Improve Access  
to Affordable Prescription Drugs in Underserved  
Areas**

Submitted on February 29, 2024

Greetings, Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and the members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.

My name is Jena Jones, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 2175.

There are numerous challenges facing older Mainers today. Folks are routinely struggling to find access to reliable and affordable housing, nutritious food, quality care and support services, and more. They should not also be struggling to ensure they have a pharmacy to access when in need of medications. Yet persistent difficulties, particularly in the more rural areas of the state, have meant that many of Maine's pharmacies are cutting back hours or closing completely.

The Community Health Centers (CHCs) that support Maine's rural communities provide comprehensive care to patients – services that people might otherwise have to travel great distances to receive. Regardless of a patient's ability to pay, CHCs offer robust primary care services and also work to integrate additional and necessary programs like behavioral health care, dental care, and even transportation services to ensure the health of not just community members, but the overall wellbeing of the community as well.

Included in those offerings are affordable pharmacy services. Yet CHCs are experiencing the same challenges related to limited workforce availability and inadequate reimbursement the rest of the healthcare field continues to endure – and like many other fields, CHC pharmacies have had to cut back hours and even close. For the more-than 200,000 people CHCs serve, this means increased difficulty in accessing medications, some of which are lifesaving.

The solution currently before you, LD 2175, would provide the financial solvency necessary desperately needed for Maine's CHCs, and thus the people who depend upon them. Through a grant program, CHC pharmacy services would not only be stabilized in areas where they are dwindling, but also grown and adapted to the needs of their communities. Whether this is

through expanded hours, access to automated pharmacy systems, or increased coordination within the patient's care team, communities with CHCs and the folks who live in them will be better served.

On behalf of all of the older Mainers who benefit from the CHCs who serve them, we urge you to vote in favor of LD 2175.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jena Jones