

February 9, 2021

Dear Health and Human Services Committee Members,

My name is James Haller MD. I am a family physician, and I am writing in support of LD 47: An Act to Fund the State's Free Health Clinics.

I have been providing services at the Portland Community Free Clinic (PCFC) since it began operating in 1993. This clinic has filled a critical need for those individuals who are unable to qualify for government funded plans such as Medicare and Medicaid and are unable to afford or access commercial insurance coverage. This clinic provides an opportunity for these patients to receive needed healthcare services. The clinic is a place where dedicated volunteer physicians, nurses, ancillary providers, and administrative volunteers can provide these patients with episodic and/or longitudinal care for a variety of acute and chronic illnesses. The clinical team is able to prescribe medication, provide vaccinations, make recommendations regarding diagnostic testing, and facilitate referrals for specialty care in a setting that is conducive for ongoing care. This care is rendered in the evenings which allows these hard-working patients access to medical appointments outside of traditional working hours.

It is reasonable to assert the success of this clinic (now in its 3rd decade) is a testimony to the dedication of the clinic staff and volunteers. However, it is the ongoing need to ensure these uninsured have access to healthcare which drives this clinic's mission. In the time since I started volunteering at this clinic, the clinic has experienced a progressive decline in funding. While the PCFC has pursued a variety of fundraising options (largely from within the volunteer pool), it has been difficult to maintain a steady source of revenue for this worthwhile cause. Access to grant money as reflected in LD 47 would be an excellent investment for the people of Maine. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

James C Haller MD