

Written Testimony for The Committee on Health and Human Services  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
Hearing on LD 47: An Act to Fund the State Free Health Clinics

To: Sen. Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Committee

I am Elizabeth Kilbreth. I have served on the Board of the Portland Community Free Clinic (PCFC) for eight years. I am now retired, but during my career as a Research Professor at the Muskie School, USM, I conducted research on the impact of medical uninsurance and evaluated many programs, both in Maine and around the country, designed to extend health care to the medically indigent and uninsured. I believe the Portland Community Free Clinic and other free clinics like it, deserve strong support for two reasons: the low barrier they present to care for those without a medical home and the high quality of care they provide.

Patients treated at the PCFC are treated with dignity and respect by health care providers and support staff, alike. Medical records are maintained so the treating physician or nurse practitioner has the patient history available at the time of the visit. Patients are assisted with obtaining needed medications at reduced or no cost, and are assisted with arrangements for diagnostic testing, procedures, or specialty visits, as needed. Patient counseling includes education on self-care and optimal maintenance of chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes.

The Friends of the PCFC (the Board) have worked hard to maintain sufficient funds through charitable giving and grants to maintain PCFC operations at a level meeting community need. But charitable giving is unreliable and tends to shrink at precisely the times when need for services is greatest. The free clinics of the State of Maine would be immeasurably helped by the public funding proposed by LD 47. I urge support of this bill as an effective way of strengthening the health care safety net in the State.

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