



**State of Maine
130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Marge Kilkelly
On behalf of the Maine Immunization Coalition
Supporting
LD 372 "An Act To Provide Maine Children Access to Affordable Health Care"
Sponsored by Senator Carney
February 23, 2021**

Thank you, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyers, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Marge Kilkelly representing the Maine Immunization Coalition (MIC). The MIC is a membership organization founded in 2008 and comprised of leading Maine healthcare organizations and individuals committed to supporting evidence-based policies that result in improved immunization rates for children and adults in the State of Maine.

Prevention is the most cost effective, lifesaving medical care. The development of vaccines is one of the most significant public health achievements in the history of medicine. The importance of vaccines and vaccine information cannot be overstated both in the impact on individuals and families and the health of the economy, as we have learned so painfully during Covid.

The Maine Immunization Coalition supports LD 372 and appreciates the sponsors bringing it forward.

Children are our most precious resource. They are the future, they hold in their hands the keys to a prospering economy, a strong state and country, sustainable communities. Their ability to live into their full potential is in being healthy and able to learn, grown and thrive.

While efforts over the past decade have greatly expanded health care coverage for children barriers remain, and too many children are left behind. LD372 elegantly removes barriers thus creating access to health care coverage for children and young people up to 20 years old. We believe that opening access to health care will increase the uptake of critical disease preventing vaccinations as well as essential well – care.

The benefits of insuring children go far beyond their immediate health needs and has long term benefits. Studies indicate that Medicaid coverage in early childhood is associated with improvements in adult health.

...“These improved outcomes included lower likelihood of high blood pressure, heart disease/heart attack, adult-onset diabetes, and obesity. Researchers presented evidence for two possible explanations of the connection between Medicaid coverage and the positive outcomes: children used more health care services, and families had reduced medical debt, presumably giving them access to a healthier lifestyle.”¹

Thank you for your consideration our comments and please contact me if we can provide additional information.

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¹ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/health-insurance-coverage-improves-child-well>