



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Kristen Cloutier

33 Charles St.

Lewiston, ME 04240

Phone: (207) 807-1637

Kristen.Cloutier@legislature.maine.gov

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*Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of
LD 979, An Act To Expand Maine's School-based Health Centers
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Kristen Cloutier and I proudly represent House District 60, part of Lewiston. I am here in support of **LD 979, An Act To Expand Maine's School-based Health Centers**.

School Based Health Centers provide timely, friendly, integrated, culturally competent and confidential access to high-quality comprehensive acute and preventative healthcare services that meet the unique needs of the school community while promoting lifelong healthy living and learning. Care is based on assessed health status and needs as well as sound school health policies, developed in collaboration with school nurses and staff, primary care and other healthcare providers. Four of these clinics are based in Lewiston-Auburn, and they provide vital services to students and families in my community.

School-based Health Centers (SBHCs) help children succeed in school and in life by keeping them healthy and ready to learn. With a focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and identifying illness early, they help to prevent more serious illness later on. They make health care available to many children who would not otherwise receive care. In Lewiston-Auburn, SBHCs are located in the high school and middle schools and are operated by Community Clinical Services, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) affiliated with St. Mary's Health System. In addition, SBHC students are eligible for savings on brand-name prescription drugs through the 340B Prescription Drug Program.

Each SBHC is staffed by a nurse practitioner, a behavioral health clinician trained to assist with mental health or substance use issues, and an administrative clinical assistant (ACA). They also provide behavioral health services at one of our local elementary schools.

This bill provides ongoing funding of \$600,000 in each year of the biennium to expand the School-based Health Centers to other regions of the state and, in particular, to our underserved rural areas. We know that there are many barriers to obtaining quality and reliable healthcare in

rural Maine. Expanding the number of SBHCs will allow us to meet the needs of students where they are: in school.

I am proud to support LD 979 and I hope you will too.