

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Elisabeth Wilson, MD

MaineHealth

In Support of LD 718,

“An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children’s Health Insurance Program”

Thursday, April 15, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Dr. Beth Wilson, Chair of Family Medicine at Maine Medical Center, and I am here today to testify in support of LD 718, “An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth’s members are committed to providing access to health care services for all patients regardless of their ability to pay or immigration status. We also provide free care to those at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, amounting to \$25 million in the past year alone.

As is the case across the country, providing access to care is not enough to overcome all of the barriers faced by our uninsured patients. We still see gaps in preventive care and delays in accessing necessary diagnostic and treatment services. This scenario can ultimately result in a higher level of complexity and more costly treatment for conditions that could otherwise have been prevented or addressed earlier. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the impacts of these disparities, and it is for these reasons that we are supporting the legislation before you today.

While MaineHealth health systems and clinics do not inquire a patient’s immigration status, our providers come to know their patients and their personal stories. One of my colleagues cared for a child who had cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. She was routinely admitted to The Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital at Maine Medical Center due to these conditions. While her care in the hospital was covered by our Free Care Policy, it was a challenge for our Access to Care team to obtain affordable medications and durable medical

equipment for her post-discharge. If this child had been covered by MaineCare, we may have been able to improve her overall health and avoid unnecessary hospitalizations.

I hear stories from my patients about how they came to this country with nothing, having been forced to leave their belongings and loved ones behind. I see how hard they work just to make ends meet. I see the contributions they make to our communities, and I admire their resilience every single day. There is nothing my patients care about more than their children, and yet sometimes they face impossible choices, avoiding or delaying health care because they simply don't have the money to pay for it. This is unacceptable.

As Representative Talbot Ross stated, every Maine resident needs and deserves health care. On behalf of the families and communities we serve, we urge the Committee to support LD 718 to provide MaineCare coverage for ALL people who need it, regardless of immigration status.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.