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Introducing LD 1608, "An Act to Expand the MaineCare Program To Cover All Citizens of the State"
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
May 10, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Senator Ben Chipman and I represent Senate District 27 which is part of the city of Portland. I am here today as a co-sponsor to speak in support of L.D 1608, An Act to Expand the MaineCare Program to Cover All Citizens of the State.

Healthcare is a basic human right. This expansion MaineCare would guarantee affordable and quality care to all Maine citizens. If the COVID-19 crisis has shown us anything, it is that investing in public health infrastructure is important and absolutely necessary. Insurance coverage ensures that people have access to medical care without fear of a financial burden.

Imagine you are sick and need to go to a doctor but can't because your insurance doesn't cover providers in your region, or you have an accident and must choose between going to the hospital or not because your deductible is too high, or you contract a highly contagious disease and can't go to the doctor to receive care because you can't afford the co-pay, or you must choose between lifesaving treatments or groceries because it's not covered in your insurance.

Many Mainers opt against preventative care and early intervention for health matters because they're under-insured or have no health insurance at all. We have passed some important reforms in the last few years here in the Maine Legislature and there are several bills to make some more improvements this year. We also finally passed MaineCare expansion last session. All of this is important but it is not enough. Even with MaineCare expansion there are still tens of thousands of Maine residents with no health care coverage. We need to take action now to provide health care to every resident of our state.

The United States one of the only countries in the world without a universal healthcare program and while there are proposals at the federal level, we could be waiting years for these proposals to be implemented. We can not and should not wait. With this bill Maine has the opportunity to set the standard for state-based health insurance. For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 1608, An Act to Expand the MaineCare Program to Cover All Citizens of the State.