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Testimony of the Maine Osteopathic Association
Before the Committee on Health and Human Services

In Reference to:

LD 1608. An Act To Expand the MaineCare Program To Cover All Citizens of the State
Public Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021 10:00 AM, Cross Building, Room 209

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Brian Kaufman, DO FACP FASAM. I hold board certification in: Internal medicine, pain medicine, Neuro-musculoskeletal medicine and addiction medicine. I currently practice pain management and addiction medicine in New Hampshire, but reside in Kennebunk and practiced in Maine for 13 years. On behalf of my physician colleagues, I am pleased to provide testimony in support of LD 1608. An Act To Expand the MaineCare Program To Cover All Citizens of the State.

The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing approximately 400 osteopathic physicians as well as more than 700 residents and students. Our mission is to “serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.”

The MOA supports access to affordable medical insurance to all Maine residents and applaud any efforts to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to be covered regardless of income level. This would undoubtedly be a great thing for Maine, however, the implementation and unintended consequences need to be considered. The total fiscal impact of this is of great concern.

The bill states: "At “Phase 4” of the program, no later than January 31, 2025, all Maine residents would be covered under MaineCare - without regard to income." We are concerned that this may lead to:

1. Maine residents dropping their existing medical insurance products if those benefits would be covered under MaineCare which could cause an enormous fiscal impact on the state.
2. If MaineCare became the primary insurer of Maine residents, physicians would have little choice but to become participating providers. Historically, Mainecare/Medicaid has been noncompetitive for physician reimbursement compared to Medicare and private insurance, such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Harvard Pilgrim, TRICARE, etc, Although the bill strives for "Fair rates of compensation with participating providers", the historical reimbursement rates speak for themselves and would likely lead to physicians moving to direct payment models, or leaving the state.
3. There is also the concern of quality of care, and equity of care for any entity that has an effective monopoly and the inherent issues with global policies affecting large numbers of our population. A recent example is the global Mainehealth policy to withdraw from opiate prescribing and the sheer numbers of patients that were left without any pain management for their chronic pain conditions. Should MaineCare decide to enact a similar policy, or something analogous, this would leave a large swatch of the population disenfranchised and without options.

For these reasons we urge caution in this ambitious endeavor.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@mainedo.org if you have any questions. Thank you.