

Geoff Gratwick, MD
Bangor

Testimony in Support:

LD 1523 - An Act To Establish the Trust for a Healthy Maine and
LD 1693 - An Act To Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a
Health Trust

Dear Esteemed Colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Geoff Gratwick, live in Bangor, retired physician, former Senate Chair of this Committee, and I believe I know most of you. It's a pleasure to lend my strong support of this legislation.

We heard a similar Trust proposal in the 129th legislature, LD 1961, bipartisan legislation sponsored by then Senator Linda Sanborn (D) and Representative Dennis Keschl (R). Like all good legislation, there were some growing pains to this complex plan. We had many questions for the proponents, and indeed, held two work sessions on this bill. In the end, with the pandemic underway, we did not feel that was the right time to enact large-scale – albeit much needed – change, and while the bill's sponsors, co-sponsors, and advocates introduced amendments to address the committee's questions and concerns, we still felt it was too complicated.

Those concerns are resolved in this new version of the proposal. I am very satisfied with the simple, straightforward solution that is presented here. I believe it resolves the questions raised by our analysts; the team has done its due diligence with engaging stakeholders, and this plan will resolve the structural deficit in the Fund for a Healthy Maine. As I suspect you know, I think we get more for our money by spending it on prevention rather than treatment. I cannot imagine a more important time for us to invest in tobacco prevention and control, workforce development and training, particularly for our local health officers, and a planful approach to addressing other public health challenges. The new health trust is good policy and I wholeheartedly support it. I hope you will as well.

Thanks very much,
Geoff