

MaineHealth

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth Neither For Nor Against LDs 1523 and 1693 Friday, February 4, 2022

MaineHealth Member Organizations:

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

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs for MaineHealth, and I am here to testify Neither For Nor Against LDs 1523 and 1693.

MaineHealth is an 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 vision of “Working together so Maine communities are the healthiest in America,” we strongly support policies that ensure Mainers have access to high quality, affordable, and equitable health care.

Part of the MaineHealth Family: With that said, we support the overall intent of the two bills before you today:

MaineHealth Accountable Care
Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates:

MaineGeneral Health
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

- All Mainers – regardless of color, immigration status, or economic status – should have access to high quality and affordable health care.
- The state tobacco prevention and treatment program should be funded at the US CDC recommended level of \$15.9 million per year.
- Flavored tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and e-cigarettes, undermine Maine’s efforts to reduce youth tobacco use.
- Increasing the cost of tobacco products will ultimately reduce the number of tobacco users in Maine.
- Beginning at an early age, we must help our children develop healthy lifestyle habits. The burden of obesity, its association with various chronic diseases and cancers, related racial and ethnic disparities, and high medical care costs, is a serious public health challenge.

Despite our support for these initiatives, we have significant concerns about the budget challenges that are created by these bills, especially for MaineCare funding. The original 1999 priorities set out in Maine statute for funding from the Master Settlement Agreement for tobacco included health insurance expansion for low-income people, and Medicaid funding has been a part of the tobacco settlement funding since the beginning. Health coverage for low-income people provides access to comprehensive health care, including preventive services, which is well-aligned with the broad goals for these funds. Additionally, dollar amounts to each state in the Master Settlement Agreement itself were based on states’ Medicaid costs due to tobacco. We agree that tobacco prevention and control needs to be the top priority for funding from the tobacco settlement, but with 20 years of funding MaineCare through the tobacco settlement, we also feel

there are major challenges to defunding MaineCare through the strategies set out in this bill. Should the Committee wish to move forward with these bills, we feel strongly that the language must be amended to restore stable and consistent funding to MaineCare.

Additionally, other states have put their tobacco settlement dollars into external trust funds overseen by an external board, as these two bills propose. In each case, future legislatures have defunded them entirely. With that said, we believe these external trust funds put the tobacco settlement dollars at much bigger risk in the long-term, and strongly oppose this provision of the bill.

Again, we are supportive of the overall intent of prioritizing tobacco prevention and control funding with Maine's share of the Master Settlement Agreement, and appreciate the work of advocates to bring these proposals forward. We hope the Legislature and Administration can find suitable strategies to accomplish the priorities outlined without disrupting MaineCare funding. We are happy to help with that process. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.