

State of Maine | 130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
February 9, 2022

Supporting:
LD 1693, "An Act To Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a Health Trust"

Sponsored by Representative Talbot Ross

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, Policy and Communications Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

MPCA is a membership organization that includes all of Maine's 20 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), also known as Community Health Centers (CHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest, independent primary care network in the state, providing comprehensive medical, behavioral, and dental care for more than 200,000 individuals or 1 in 6 Maine people. They are at the forefront of delivering care to rural and underserved Maine communities and serve patients regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay.

Maine Primary Care Association supports LD 1693 and thanks Representative Talbot Ross and the other co-sponsors for bringing this bill forward. This bill, along with its companion LD 1523, "An Act to Establish the Trust for a Healthy Maine," aims to provide a necessary solution to the financial challenges facing the Fund for a Healthy Maine, and creates a pathway for systemic structural change that will benefit public health in the state.

We strongly support efforts to build and sustain a modern, cost-effective system of public health. Establishing the Trust for a Healthy Maine and restructuring tobacco settlement funding would guarantee annual investment in the systems and community-based infrastructure necessary to achieve health equity.

CHCs are on the frontlines of providing health care in Maine and serve the most vulnerable populations in our state. Programs currently funded through the Fund for a Healthy Maine to address nicotine addiction, obesity, oral health, and substance use disorders, among many others, directly align with the work that they are doing. It is imperative that we find a long-term, workable solution to ensure that continued financial support is available for these programs.

LD 1693 provides an important opportunity to ensure that the tobacco settlement funding will continue to benefit the lives of Maine people. On behalf of Maine's Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments in support of the establishment of the Trust for a Healthy Maine. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hhudson@mepca.org with any follow up questions.

Hannah A. Hudson, MA
Policy and Communications Manager, MPCA