

State of Maine 130th Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
February 22, 2022

Testimony in Support of
LD 393, “Sponsor’s Amendment: An Act To Amend the Laws Regarding Health and Human
Services”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Barbara Crider, and I am the Executive Director of York County Community Action. Our organization administers a number of health, educational, and social service programs serving the residents of York County, Maine. These programs include WIC, a nutritional support program for pregnant and lactating women and their children, Head Start and Early Head Start, serving low income families and their children from birth to age 5, housing and energy services, transportation, and health and dental services at Nasson Health Care, our federally qualified health center.

Our agency comes into contact with hundreds of families each year who, through a combination of lack of economic opportunity, lack of affordable and stable housing, untreated physical and mental health conditions (including substance use disorders) among other circumstances, find that they cannot provide the stability and security necessary for their children to thrive. Many of these families find themselves involved with the child protective system.

Prior to my position at York Count Community Action, I practiced law for several years. In that role, I had the chance to represent parents with children in the custody of the state and to serve as a guardian *ad litem* for children in foster care.

My work experience has made it clear to me that if the social safety net was adequately resourced and access to quality health care was available without barriers, we could prevent hundreds of children who are now in the child protective and foster care systems from being removed from their homes.

The various elements of LD 393 are investments in early intervention with vulnerable families. Supporting families in achieving and maintaining the stability necessary to provide care for their children not only saves money, but provides the best outcomes for all, especially children.

Section 4 of LD 393, which contemplates using the network of Maine's Federally Qualified Health Centers, is a particularly important element of the bill. Fully 50% of the parents involved with the child protective system struggle with some form of substance use disorder. Currently, accessing treatment is difficult for many, particularly in the most rural parts of Maine. Enhancing the capacity of FQHC's, like our Nasson Health Care in York County, to provide effective treatment, can literally enable parents to become and remain the loving parents they want to be. I would also encourage you to invest in the transit infrastructure, so that people in need of treatment can regularly attend and participate in programs that are or will become available.

YCCAC is grateful to the Committee and to the bill's sponsor, for having the foresight to advocate for adequately resourcing the services that can, and will, create a better life for children and families across Maine. We remain eager to engage with you as this work unfolds.

Respectfully submitted,

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