

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

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

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth in Opposition to LD 1436, “An Act to Protect Certain Essential Workers from Infectious Disease”

Friday, April 30, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1436, “An Act to Protect Certain Essential Workers from Infectious Disease.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system. We provide a full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. Every day, MaineHealth’s over 23,000 employees are committed to fulfilling our vision of “working together so our communities are the healthiest in America.”

This commitment has never been more evident than over the past 14 months as our care team members have stood on the front lines of the pandemic, providing outstanding care amid challenging circumstances. During this time, MaineHealth has stood by them, doing everything possible to ease their burden and ensure their safety, just as they have done everything possible to care for their patients.

During the pandemic, hospitals have been required to meet U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines related to patient and care team member safety. In strict compliance with CDC guidelines, MaineHealth has supplied its care team members with the necessary and required personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep them safe. In fact, in some cases, we exceeded CDC guidelines. Our care team members also received specialized training regarding the proper use of PPE and were properly fitted for these forms of protective equipment.

It is important to note that, to date, MaineHealth hospitals have received very little or no PPE from the stockpile managed by the Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. When the supply chain deteriorated, it was only due to the strength of our system that we were able to be strategic about procurement, storage, and product rotation to ensure that our care team members were provided with the necessary PPE. We also worked with local companies, like L.L. Bean and Flowfold, as well as the University

System to manufacture our own PPE. It was this flexibility and ingenuity that allowed us to then donate desperately needed PPE to nursing homes and other congregate living facilities.

The legislation before you today is flawed in its attempt to address the shortage of PPE and will impose a significant financial burden on already struggling hospitals, nursing homes, and other health care providers, significantly restrict the use of available PPE, and focuses on a past situation related to this pandemic and not on the variety of scenarios that could impact us next. Instead, the Legislature should be providing the flexibility and resources necessary to prepare for a variety of public health emergencies.

I urge this Committee vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1436. Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.