

Testimony in Support of

LD: 1787 "An Act To Improve the Quality and Affordability of Primary Health Care Provided by Federally Qualified Health Centers"

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I serve as CEO of Harrington Family Health Center, a community health center serving constituents in Washington County serving 50 rural towns. Harrington Family Health Center strongly supports LD 1787 and thanks Senators Claxton and Moore for bringing this bill forward.

Harrington Family Health Center provides services at one location and has cared for over 3,000 patients in 2021. Our team delivers medical, behavioral health, dental, and podiatry services to members of our community, regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay.

LD: 1787 "An Act To Improve the Quality and Affordability of Primary Health Care Provided by Federally Qualified Health Centers" is a much-needed bill. It addresses the concerns of Maine's Community Health Center Network regarding plans by Maine DHHS to revise its payment method for primary care services. The current design will significantly reduce funding for many health centers, Harrington Family Health Center included. Amid the worst global health crisis in modern times.

To preserve the advanced primary care model pioneered by Maine CHCs, MaineCare payments for those services must be increased to reflect the current costs of providing services before the Department establishes an alternative payment model for CHCs.

- The current MaineCare reimbursement rates for services delivered by CHCs are based on the costs of providing services 20 years ago.
- Rates have not been adjusted to keep pace with increases in the costs, intensity, and scope of services offered.
- A solution to this problem exists and has been implemented for another rural primary care provider in Maine. In 2019, outdated service rates for rural health clinics (RHCs) were rebased. The same kind of adjustment is crucial for the continued success of CHCs.

A rebasing would allow Harrington Family Health Center to compete with local hospital systems when recruiting skilled staff members, including physicians, dentists, NP, PAs, and many other highly competent team members. Rebasing would allow Harrington Family Health Center to expand services, such as alternative pain management care. Hiring RN's for chronic disease management, medical scribes to reduce provider burnout, and many other services needed in our community.

Community health centers, one of the few health care providers in Maine that have not received any pandemic relief from the state, exist as a fragile safety net in the best of times while serving at the forefront of integrated primary care. LD 1787 would help maintain access to health care for Maine's most rural and underserved communities.

On behalf of Harrington Family Health Center, thank you for considering our comments in support of LD 1787. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any follow-up questions.

Belinda Fletcher, CEO